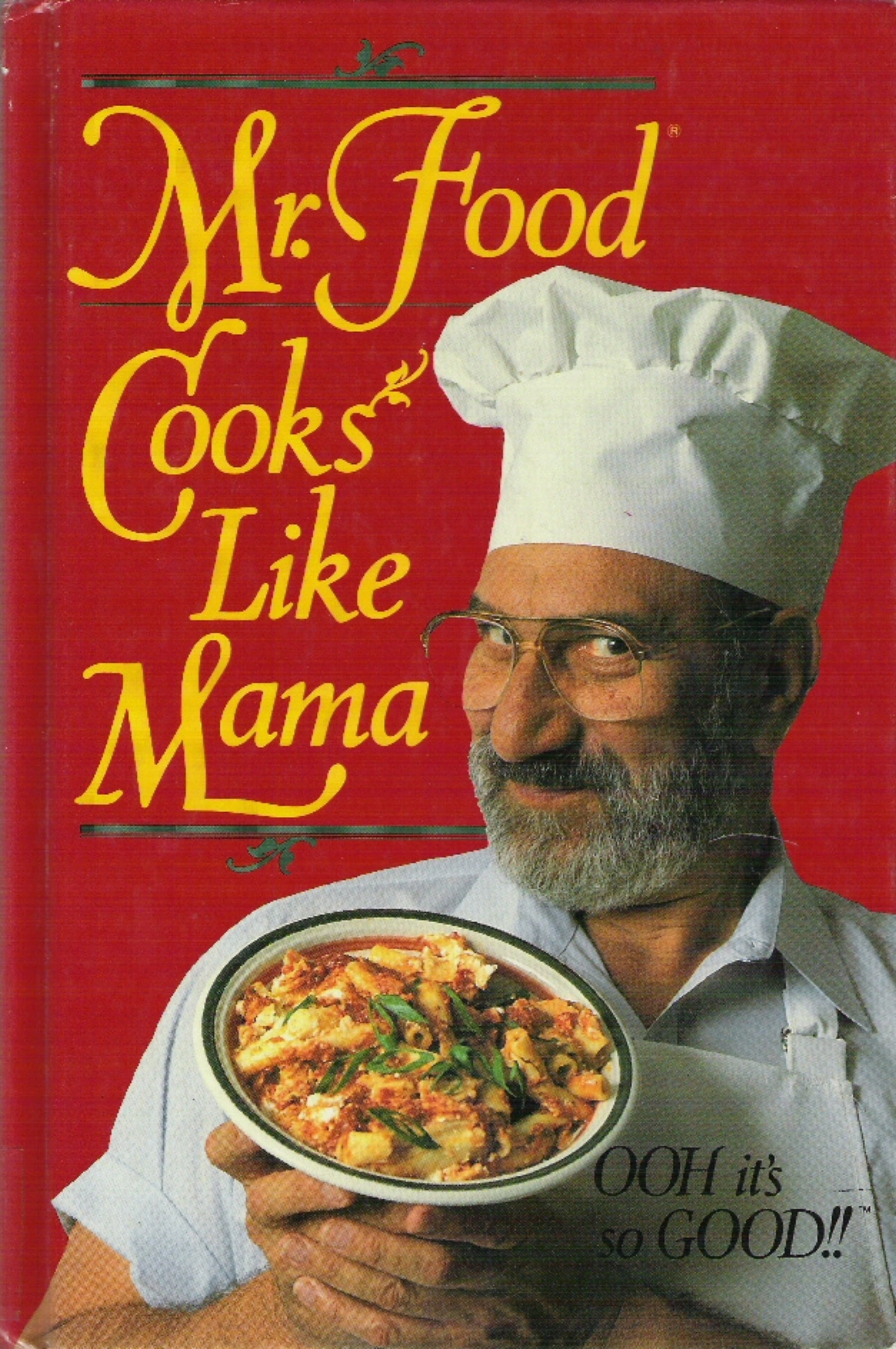
Mr. Food® Cooks Like Mama



OOH it's so GOOD!!™

MR. FOOD®

Cooks Like Mama *but easier!*

Art Ginsburg
MR. FOOD®

William Morrow and Company, Inc.
New York

Acknowledgments

Thanks to all the super public relations people who are an endless source of great ideas; to all the people who let me in on their Mamas' specialties and little family food "secrets"; and to my viewers who allow me into their homes every day. I sure hope I can return their welcome by adding some happiness to their days.

Thanks, also, to my editor, Maria Guarnaschelli, who knows how to guide and balance me with a smile, and to my agent, Bill Adler, who knows how to guide me with his foresight and practicality.

A special note of thanks to the food staff of the *Miami Herald*–Felicia, Linda, Linda, and Geoffrey–who, without knowing it, have helped keep my food sparks going for years. What a food section, up-to-the-minute and sensible!!

Special thanks to my "background team," Ethel, Chuck, Gersh, Tammy, and Flo, for their prodding, support, and patience during the many hours we put into creating this book. Also, thanks to the rest of my terrific staff in the MR. FOOD® organization whose team spirit keeps me going.

It takes a lot of people to do this right! I thank you all for sharing the OOH it's so GOOD!!™

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Recipes courtesy of McCormick®/Schilling®: Holiday Quick Bread, Strawberries Romanoff, and Strawberries Romanoff Cake.

Green Bean Bake recipe courtesy of Campbell's Soup.

Melted Provolone in Tomato Sauce recipe courtesy of Valerie Dominioni, *Great Italian Cooking* (New York: Doubleday, 1987).

Appetizers

Appetizers and starters are the best! They set the tone for the rest of the meal.

Mama used to make some yummies to get us started off right. But today we don't have to make appetizers or starters that keep us busy in the kitchen all day. Nope!

We've got some quickies here that'll start us in the right direction to "yummy"—with a lot more fun and a lot less work. Start off with yummies, and everything after that is yummy, too. (And they're as easy as saying OOH it's so GOOD!!™)

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Introduction

Our Mamas and Grandmas worked for hours to make the foods that we love to remember. They made everything from scratch—they had to. Mama shopped daily for fresh items, brought them home, and cut, chopped, boiled—you name it. Well, believe me, she wouldn't have done it that way if she hadn't had to! Today most of these things are already done for us by our food producers and markets. We buy items ready to use right off the shelf. Whether it's cake mixes, sauce mixes, pancake mixes, whatever, we should feel great about using them . . . 'cause **they're** great.

And what about time? It's the biggest consideration in modern cooking. We don't have time for intricate, gourmet recipes that require lots of steps and exotic ingredients, even if we wanted them. With all the outside activities of our two-income families, we need quick meals that we can make at home, so we can feel good about feeding our families homemade meals that are well balanced and reasonably priced yet still made to our own taste touches.

Today we have more mobility than Mama ever did. We shop in bigger markets with more fresh, processed, and convenience items to help us prepare our dinners "quick as a wink." Notice I said "prepare"—that's because that's really what we do with food today. We "prepare" more than we "cook." Well, sure! We usually stop in the market on the way home from some place and pick up something "ready to eat" or "ready to heat." Lots of times we make a salad along with it. We use canned and frozen foods—whatever is fast—and, presto, we have our meal.

Sometimes we're just too tired and we simply pick up take-out foods on our way home so that all we have to do is serve and eat.

Well, they're good, so why not? No, we don't do it all the time, but we do it a lot and it's OK.

There's still a lot of home preparation and cooking going on. Sometimes we cook on the weekend, making enough for a few meals. We do whatever we can, depending on our time and priorities. And, even with limited time we can *still* get some of Mama's tastes.

In fact, today it's easier to get those tastes. We've got more fresh herbs like the ones she used (but now they're available year 'round). We've got convenience items and mixes that take all the prelabor out of a recipe. Somebody else has done it for us. It's like having a helper in the kitchen doing a lot of the "rough part." We can buy salad veggies all cut and cleaned (and our produce is cleaner to start with). We've got some thick homestyle spaghetti sauces that are *almost* as good as Mama's (none will ever have her expert touch, but they come pretty close!). So, to relive the tastes that we remember, start with seasonings.

Ya know, there's no doubt that the spice rack is the most important tool in the kitchen. It's the world at our fingertips, our adventure, our joy, our nostalgia. And with everyone being more health-conscious today, we've all got to be more aware of what we're eating. We can usually do that and still get those old-fashioned tastes, too. What better way to start than with our spice rack?

We're constantly getting blasted with reports about nutrition and health-related food information. Now, I'm not a dietician or nutritionist, but I think you can enjoy the tastes you like if you're willing to fit recipes to your "special" situation. Nearly every recipe can be adapted for a particular restriction, whether it's low-fat, low-salt, low-sugar, whatever. Don't be afraid to try substitutions. For the most part, we can usually use yogurt for sour cream, ground turkey for beef, bacon bits or liquid smoke for bacon, etc. You know by now what you can and can't have, but be sure to check with your doctor if you have any questions.

Sometimes . . . no, most times, we'd like to make one special item that's simple, fast, inexpensive, exciting, and fun—something that'll be the talk of the table, a quick throw-together that can make the whole meal homemade. This book will help you do it; from a dip to dessert and everything in between, it's an "idea" book. There are no strict rules and regulations. You can usually use any brands and any substitutions. I've tried to suggest plenty of options, but be sure to include your own touches.

Half the fun is the experiment, and the success you enjoy when your experiment works. So, let this book be the "idea" that answers the number-one food question, "What should I make tonight?" Then, as I said, make it the book way, a modified-by-you way, or totally your very own way. It's a help even if it was just the "idea." It's the book that'll be at your fingertips on the kitchen counter, not on the never-used book rack or coffee table. They're all anybody-can-do-it-now recipes, recipes that smack of those old-time tastes without the old-time work.

Want recipes that take lots of ingredients or call for exotic, hard-to-get ingredients?

They're not here.

Want recipes that have a lot of preparation steps and keep you in the kitchen for hours (making your kitchen a total mess)?

They're not here.

Want recipes that you'll make once and never again?

They're not here, either.

BUT

If you want

- quick, easy, fun recipes that you can make with ingredients right off your kitchen shelf or the local supermarket shelf;
- recipes that'll make you a kitchen hero 'cause they taste like the ones Mama made, but without all the work and mess Mama had;
- recipes that let you use whatever brands you want and let you add your own touches;
- recipes that work even if you don't stick to hard rules and regulations;
- anyone-can-do recipes that can be put together in a snap—

then, BOY, OH BOY!! Have I got a book for you!!

Here it is! And you're gonna use it over and over again!!! And over and over again, you're gonna be saying

OOH it's so GOOD!!™

Fresh Herb Chart

If a recipe calls for fresh herbs and you want to use dried herbs instead, simply use half the amount of dried herbs. For instance, instead of using 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil, use 1½ teaspoons dried basil. It works the same way with any type of herb. Whatever you choose, have fun!

Herb	Complementary Foods	Complementary Herbs
Basil	Tomatoes, tomato sauces, pasta, salads, fish, eggs, lamb, vegetables	Oregano, parsley, marjoram, thyme, mint, savory, chives
Chives	Carrots, cheese, eggs, fish, potatoes, green salads, soups, spinach, tomatoes	Basil, coriander, dill, marjoram, oregano, parsley, tarragon, thyme
Coriander (Cilantro)	Bread, cheese, chicken, eggs, fish, lamb, mushrooms, pork, green salads, soups, tomatoes	Chives, garlic, marjoram, oregano, parsley
Dill	Veal, chicken, fish, eggs, bread, potatoes, cucumbers, most vegetables, yogurt, sour cream, mustard	Tarragon, rosemary, marjoram, thyme, chives
Marjoram	Green beans, beef, cauliflower, eggplant, eggs, fish, mushrooms, soups, squash, stuffing, veal, poultry	Basil, bay leaf, chives, coriander, garlic, oregano, mint, parsley, rosemary, sage, savory, thyme

Fresh Herb Chart *(Continued)*

Herb	Complementary Foods	Complementary Herbs
Mint	Carrots, chicken, fruit, frosted beverages, lamb, salads, peas, potatoes	Basil, parsley, tarragon
Oregano	Beef, eggs, fish, lamb, pork, potatoes, salads, stews, tomatoes, veal, vegetables	Basil, bay leaf, chives, coriander, garlic, marjoram, mint, parsley, savory, thyme
Rosemary	Beef, bread, cauliflower, chicken, eggs, lamb, tomatoes, turkey, veal	Savory, thyme, sage
Sage	Dried beans, beef, bread, cheese, eggs, fish, soup, stuffing, turkey	Bay leaf, garlic, marjoram, oregano, parsley, rosemary, savory, thyme
Tarragon	Beef, eggs, fish, lamb, potatoes, salads, tomatoes, turkey, vegetables	Parsley, chives, bay leaf, dill, garlic, mint, savory
Thyme	Dried and green beans, beef, cheese, chicken, eggplant, eggs, fish, lamb	Basil, bay leaf, chives, garlic, marjoram, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, savory, tarragon

Compliments of Goodness Gardens

Seasoning Combinations

This can make it a little easier to get creative and adventurous (and playful)!

Poultry

- Rosemary and thyme
  Tarragon, marjoram, and onion & garlic powders
- Cumin, bay leaf, and saffron or turmeric
  Ginger, cinnamon, and allspice
- Curry powder, thyme, and onion powder

Beef

- Thyme, bay leaf, and instant minced onion
- Ginger, dry mustard, and garlic powder
  Dill, nutmeg, and allspice
- Black pepper, bay leaf, and cloves
  Chili powder, cinnamon, and oregano

Pork

Caraway seed, red pepper, and paprika
Thyme, dry mustard, and sage
Oregano and bay leaf
Anise, ginger, and sesame seed
Tarragon, bay leaf, and instant minced garlic

Fish and Seafood

Cumin and oregano
- Tarragon, thyme, parsley flakes, and garlic powder

Thyme, fennel, saffron, and red pepper
Ginger, sesame seed, and white pepper
Coriander (cilantro), parsley flakes, cumin, and garlic powder

Potatoes

- Dill, onion powder, and parsley flakes
- Caraway seed and onion powder
- Nutmeg and chives

Rice

- Chili powder and cumin
- Curry powder, ginger, and coriander (cilantro)
- Cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves

Pasta

- Basil, rosemary, and parsley flakes
- Cumin, turmeric, and red pepper
- Oregano and thyme

Vegetables

- *Green beans:* marjoram and rosemary; caraway seed and dry mustard
- *Broccoli:* ginger and garlic powder; sesame seed and nutmeg
- *Cabbage:* celery seed and dill; curry powder and nutmeg
- *Carrots:* cinnamon and nutmeg; ginger and onion powder
- *Corn:* chili powder and cumin; dill and onion powder
- *Peas:* anise and onion powder; rosemary and marjoram
- *Spinach:* curry powder and ginger; nutmeg and garlic powder
- *Summer squash:* mint and parsley flakes; tarragon and garlic powder
- *Winter squash:* cinnamon and nutmeg; allspice and red pepper
- *Tomatoes:* basil and rosemary; cinnamon and ginger

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San Antonio Wings

10 to 12 servings

Want something new and exciting for your entertaining that's different from what you had last week or the week before? Here's a wing recipe that's chicken light, Tex-Mex popular, and easy. And pardner, it's a new OOH it's so GOOD!!™

- 5 pounds chicken wings (20 to 25)
- 1½ cups mild picante sauce
- 1½ cups ketchup
- 1 cup honey
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin

SAUCE

- 1 bottle (16 ounces) mild picante sauce
- 1 container (16 ounces) sour cream

Split the wings at each joint and discard tips; rinse, then pat dry. Place chicken wings in a shallow dish. In a bowl, combine 1½ cups picante sauce, ketchup, honey, and ground cumin; pour over chicken wings. Cover and marinate wings in refrigerator for at least 1 hour. Preheat oven to 350°F. Remove the wings from marinade and place on a cookie sheet; save marinade. Bake wings for 30 minutes. Brush wings with reserved marinade; turn and bake for 15 minutes more. Discard excess marinade. Preheat broiler and cook wings for 5 minutes more on each side. In a bowl, mix together sauce ingredients and serve as dipping sauce for wings.

NOTE: These wings are great served right from the oven *or* served cold or rewarmed on the grill at a picnic.

Crab Dip

the barbecue gang sees you
for them to have along with
ead. And they'll be hanging
d some help, they'll be right

cup milk
can (6½ ounces)
crabmeat flakes,
drained
cup dry white wine

d milk; place on the coolest
stovetop and stir until the
cook until heated through.

th imitation crabmeat (and

Sweet-and-Hot Dip

about 5 cups

This has so many uses! Try it with a fresh veggie platter . . . it's anything but the plain, old dip. For your cooked veggies, it's like a gourmet sauce. It even works wonders on fruit! I like to keep some on hand in the fridge in case friends drop over.

- 3 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup orange marmalade
- ½ cup apricot jam or preserves
- ¼ cup hot pepper sauce
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

In a bowl, combine all ingredients and mix thoroughly until smooth. Cover and refrigerate to "marry" the flavors.

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Not-Fried Eggplant .

30 to 35 pieces

Like eggplant but think it's a pain in the neck to make? Well, that may be true sometimes but not always. Here's how to make it easy and delicious!

- 1 medium to large eggplant
- 1 cup seasoned bread crumbs
- ⅓ cup grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 375°F. Slice eggplant into ½-inch slices, then into 1-inch strips. In a bowl, combine bread crumbs, cheese, salt, and pepper. Place oil in a shallow dish; add eggplant strips and toss to coat. Then toss strips in bread crumb mixture and place on a foil-lined cookie sheet. Bake for about 20 minutes, then turn and bake for 5 minutes more, until golden brown.

NOTE: Serve with sour cream and chives, if desired.

Eggplant Appetizer

about 4 cups

Here's another great way to enjoy eggplant with no fuss and no muss! It's like an easy Sicilian-style caponata–such a rich-tasting relish.

- ½ cup olive oil
- 2 large onions, well chopped
- 3 large garlic cloves, minced
- 6 cups diced eggplant (about ¾ of a medium-sized eggplant)
- 1 can (14½ ounces) tomatoes, drained and chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1¼ teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon hot pepper sauce
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ cup red or white wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ¼ cup pitted black olives, chopped

Heat oil in a heavy saucepan. Add onion and cook for 3 minutes; add garlic and cook for 2 to 3 minutes more. Add eggplant and cook for at least 15 minutes more, stirring frequently, until eggplant is softened. Add tomatoes, lemon juice, salt, hot pepper sauce, and pepper. Simmer until mixture is soft and mushy, similar to relish. In a separate saucepan, heat vinegar and stir in sugar; add to eggplant mixture. Garnish with chopped olives.

NOTE: Serve cold or warm with crackers.

Shrimp Dip

about 2½ cups

They'll be saying "Olé!" when you serve this Tex-Mex–style dip. And we'll be saying "Olé!" 'cause it's so fast and easy!

- ½ pound cooked shrimp *or* 2 cans (4¼ ounces each) shrimp, rinsed and drained
- 1 small package (3 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- ⅓ cup Thousand Island dressing
- ⅓ cup mayonnaise
- ⅓ cup picante sauce
- 2 tablespoons grated or chopped onion
- 1 teaspoon horseradish

Finely chop the shrimp, reserving a few whole shrimp for garnish. In a large bowl, combine chopped shrimp with remaining ingredients; mix well. Spoon mixture into serving bowl, garnish with reserved shrimp, and chill.

NOTE: Serve with crackers, veggies, or tortilla chips and, for a change, try real or imitation crabmeat instead of shrimp. This also works well as a special salad dressing. Or try this: Spread on garlic bread, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese, and heat under the broiler for 5 minutes. Mmmm!!

Tex-Mex Dip

20 to 25 servings
(Yes, it feeds a mob!)

This is the perfect party dish. It looks so great and it gets everybody raving–even you, since you can make it a day ahead and enjoy it along with the rest of the gang. It's probably my favorite!

- 2 cans (9 ounces each) jalapeño bean dip
- 3 ripe avocados, mashed (about 1½ cups frozen mashed)
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 container (16 ounces) sour cream
- 1 package (1.25 ounces) taco seasoning mix
- 1½ cups (6 ounces) shredded Cheddar cheese
- 4 scallions, finely chopped
- 1 medium-sized tomato, diced

Spread bean dip on a large plastic or glass serving tray (about a 12-inch round). In a large bowl, combine avocados, mayonnaise, and lemon juice; spread over bean dip. In a separate bowl, combine sour cream and taco seasoning mix; spread over first two layers. Then sprinkle with cheese, then scallions, then tomato. Cover loosely and refrigerate overnight to "marry" the flavors.

NOTE: Just put this out with tortilla chips and stand back!

Cheesy Onion Puffs

12 servings

Wanna serve something that'll really be noticed by your party guests? This party hors d'oeuvre may look hard, but you'll know how homemade-easy it really is! (That's 'cause the ready-made frozen pastry sheets take all the work out of it.)

- 1 box (17¼ ounces) frozen puff pastry sheets, thawed (2 unbaked sheets)
- 1 container (15 ounces) ricotta cheese
- 2 cups (8 ounces) grated Cheddar cheese
- 1 medium-sized onion, finely chopped (about 2 cups)
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 pinches cayenne pepper

Preheat oven to 375°F. Unfold 1 puff pastry sheet onto a 10" × 15" cookie sheet. In a large bowl, mix together the remaining ingredients, except the second pastry sheet. Spread cheese-onion mixture onto the unfolded pastry sheet. Unfold remaining puff pastry sheet and place over mixture. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes or until golden. Cool slightly, cut into squares, and serve warm.

NOTE: For even lighter puffs, you can use lowfat ricotta or Cheddar cheese. You can also cut down on the salt and add your favorite flavorings or fresh herbs.

Lobster Dip

about 2½ cups

For a lot of special and *delicious, try this great party dip that reminds us of summers at the seashore.*

- 8 ounces (½ pound) lobster meat, chopped
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon bottled minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon minced onion
- 1 teaspoon honey mustard

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

NOTE: Serve with an assortment of crackers or cut-up veggies. You can substitute imitation crabmeat for the lobster meat if you want—it works well, too!

Texas Quick Dip

3½ cups

Drop-in visitors got you in a panic? No sweat! Here's a quick and easy dip they're sure to love. It just takes mixing four ingredients. (It sure tastes like more than that, though!)

- 2 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 jar (8 ounces) mild or medium salsa
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt

In a medium-sized bowl, beat the cream cheese until smooth. Add sour cream. Fold in salsa and seasoned salt. Store in refrigerator but serve at room temperature.

NOTE: Serve with chips or veggies.

Danish Blue Cheese Spread

1¼ cups

Here's a surprisingly different taste that's holiday festive, too ('cause it's got little red and green pieces in it). With its great taste and great look I know you'll enjoy it doubly!

- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ⅓ cup crumbled blue cheese, softened
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, softened
- ¼ cup ripe pimiento-stuffed olives, chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ teaspoon garlic salt

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients and mix well, until smooth. Store in refrigerator but serve at room temperature.

NOTE: If you'd like a little smoother consistency, add a teaspoon or two of milk. There are lots of nice ways to serve this. You can place it in a serving bowl and surround it with your favorite crackers. Make a cheese ball this way: Line a medium-sized bowl with plastic wrap. Lightly press mixture into bowl, flattening top; cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate. When ready to serve, invert cheese ball onto platter, remove plastic wrap, and sprinkle with additional chopped parsley. Or you can toast it: Cut fresh French bread into ½- to ¾-inch slices. Spread generously with cheese spread. Broil 6 inches from heat for 4 to 5 minutes or until spread is bubbly.

French Pickled Mushrooms

6 servings

Sometimes we want to serve something that looks and tastes fancy but doesn't require a lot of fancy work. Well, here's one that'll do all *those things. The nice relishy tang will really spark the tastebuds.*

- 2 packages (12 ounces each) fresh mushrooms, stems trimmed
- ⅔ cup tarragon vinegar
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- Dash fresh pepper
- 2 tablespoons water
- Dash hot pepper sauce
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon dried tarragon

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients, except mushrooms; mix well, then add mushrooms. Marinate overnight in the refrigerator, turning occasionally so that all of the mushrooms are soaked in the marinade. Store in a tightly covered container for up to 2 days.

NOTE: Instead of tarragon vinegar, you can use cider vinegar combined with an additional tablespoon of dried tarragon. This recipe will probably serve 8 to 10 people as a party hors d'oeuvre. Just serve with toothpicks and watch the mushrooms disappear!

Tarragon Dip

1 cup

Having the gang over? Here's a dip that's sure to be a hit—with you and *with them! It's another "just-throw-it-together-fast" dip that we need when there's no time to fuss around.*

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons chopped onion
- 1 teaspoon dried tarragon
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh parsley
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

In a medium-sized bowl, mix together all ingredients. Store in refrigerator until ready to serve.

NOTE: This goes great with fresh veggies. If you want to add some zip, try it with a teaspoon of horseradish.

Really Italian Bread

24 to 30 servings

Stuck for an appetizer or a snack? How about something Italian-fancy and easy? (Probably the best upgraded garlic bread, too.)

- 1 1-pound loaf Italian bread, cut in half lengthwise
- 1 garlic clove, minced, or 1 teaspoon bottled garlic
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ½ cup thinly sliced scallions
- 1 small tomato, chopped
- 1½ cups (6 ounces) shredded mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 500°F. Place bread, cut-side up, on a foil-lined baking sheet; set aside. In a small bowl, mix together the garlic, olive oil, salt, and pepper; drizzle mixture over sliced bread. Sprinkle bread with scallions and tomato, then top with cheese. Bake in upper half of oven for 5 to 7 minutes or until cheese melts and edges of bread brown. Cut into 1-inch pieces and serve.

NOTE: You can garnish this with chopped sweet pepper or fresh herbs, if you like. Instead of a loaf of Italian bread, you can try this with a couple of submarine rolls if that's what you've got on hand. It'll be just as crunchy scrumptious!

Spanish Cheese Tarts

12 servings

This can be Spanish, Portuguese, Central or South American, or Mexican–depending on the type of chorizo (sausage) used. The slight sweet of the crust makes it the perfect, easy "authentic."

- 2 packages (6 shells each) graham cracker tart shells
- 2 egg yolks, beaten
- ¾ pound (12 ounces) sausage meat (chorizo, sage, scrapple, or cubed kielbasa)
- ¼ cup minced onion
- 1 bottle (16 ounces) chunky salsa
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ¾ cup (3 ounces) grated Monterey Jack cheese
- Dried oregano for sprinkling

Preheat oven to 350°F. Brush tart shells with beaten egg yolks and bake for about 3 minutes, until light golden. Remove from oven and let cool. Meanwhile, remove sausage from casing. Brown sausage and onion in a large skillet until sausage is well done and onion is tender. Spoon sausage mixture into cooled tart shells. Place salsa in a large bowl and add eggs; mix well. Pour the salsa mixture over the sausage mixture. Top each tart with cheese and sprinkle with oregano. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until cheese is melted and light golden.

NOTE: To make an Italian version, use Italian sausage and substitute spaghetti sauce for the salsa and shredded mozzarella for the Monterey Jack cheese. All other ingredients are the same. You can also use minced turkey sausage or your own favorite kind—the flavor will still be delicious!

Chicken Puffs

8 servings

Don't know what to do with that leftover chicken? How about a simple chicken sensation? They'll never know it's from leftovers–honest! In fact, I've been buying chicken just to make these. They can be a main course, also; simply serve two or three of them. They're a really fancy-looking and -tasting guaranteed "rave"!

- 2 small packages (3 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
- 5 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted and divided
- 2 cups diced cooked chicken
- ¼ cup milk
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons minced onion
- 2 tablespoons diced pimientos
- 2 cans (8 ounces each) crescent rolls

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, mix together the cream cheese and 3 tablespoons melted butter. Add the chicken, milk, pepper, minced onion, and pimientos; mix well. Separate each package of crescent rolls into four rectangles. Divide the chicken filling evenly and spoon into center of each rectangle. Bring ends up together and pinch closed. Brush with remaining 2 tablespoons of melted butter. Place puffs on a greased cookie sheet and bake for 12 to 15 minutes or until golden brown.

NOTE: If you'd like, sprinkle puffs with a touch of your favorite spice. You can use all white-meat chicken, all dark, or a combination–whatever you have on hand or prefer.

Easy Seafood Dip

about 3 cups

Here's a dip I make at holiday time that's so amazingly quick and simple. You can serve it anytime, though, 'cause it makes any gathering holiday special!

- 1 container (8 ounces) sour cream
- 1 cup chopped cooked shrimp or crabmeat
- ⅓ cup finely chopped green pepper
- ⅓ cup finely chopped onion
- ⅓ cup finely chopped celery
- ⅓ cup bottled chili sauce
- 1 tablespoon horseradish
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients; chill. Keep refrigerated until ready to serve.

NOTE: Serve with vegetable and bread dippers. Imitation crabmeat or shrimp work well, too.

Parmesan Pita Triangles

about 20 servings

Pita is practically perfect! With pita bread on hand you'll always be able to make a quick appetizer. Try this quick garlicky bread appetizer that can be even better topped with chili, salsa, chicken salad, or whatever you choose!

- 5 pita bread rounds
- 6 tablespoons (3 ounces) melted butter
- Garlic powder for sprinkling
- Grated Parmesan cheese for sprinkling

Preheat oven to broil. Cut each pita into 6 pie slice-shaped wedges. Separate each wedge into 2 triangles and place on cookie sheets. Brush each pita triangle with melted butter. Sprinkle garlic powder and Parmesan cheese over each triangle and broil for 1 to 2 minutes, until cheese is bubbly and lightly browned. Serve warm.

Relishes and Sauces

A relish is so much . . .
It's

something savored
something that tweaks the tastebuds
something that'll be the sharp point of each bite
something that'll be the extra touch on the table

Relishes and sauces are those extra special "somethings" that raise the level of whatever they're served under, over, or with. Mama spent hours making them from great bargain in-season items. Today we can throw them together in no time. With the markets full of goodies to help us, we can make relishes and sauces that still do the same things they always did. For instance, roast beef done just right is wonderful, but serve it with gourmet-sounding but simple-to-make Carpaccio Sauce or Garlic Sauce . . . WOW!! Get the picture?? Here are some easy ones. Go ahead, look like a hero!

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Really Shortcut "Béarnaise" Sauce

2 cups

Wanna "dress up" a piece of meat without going to a lot of trouble? Here's how all the Mamas in France do it today. (They don't like a lot of work either!)

- 1 envelope (1.25 ounces) Hollandaise sauce mix
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon dry white wine
- 1 teaspoon dried tarragon
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt (or to taste)

In a saucepan, prepare Hollandaise sauce according to package directions. Mix in remaining ingredients. Transfer to serving bowl and refrigerate until ready to use. Serve at room temperature.

Fresh Bell Pepper–Celery Chowchow

4½ cups

Sometimes one little homemade item on the table makes the whole meal taste homemade. Here's a Pennsylvania Dutch–type relish that everybody'll love. They'll say you shouldn't have fussed–and you didn't!

- 4 cups coarsely chopped celery
- 1 cup coarsely chopped green bell pepper
- 1 cup coarsely chopped red bell pepper
- ½ cup coarsely chopped onion
- ½ cup wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon mixed pickling spice
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 teaspoon caraway seed

Place celery, green and red bell pepper, and onion in a large bowl; set aside. In a saucepan, combine vinegar and pickling spice; bring mixture to a boil and boil for 5 minutes. Strain mixture, then add sugar, salt, and caraway seed; pour over vegetables. Cover and refrigerate for 24 hours before serving. Store in refrigerator for up to 1 week.

NOTE: This is a great accompaniment to any meal. It can even take the place of a salad.

Middle Eastern Meat Sauce

6 servings

How about something different for a change? Like meat sauce without tomatoes–that's right, no tomatoes! This one is a Middle Eastern version and it's so simple to prepare. And there are loads of other exciting ways to prepare meat sauce. Just by changing a few ingredients, you can visit a different country every time you serve it!

- 1½ pounds lean ground beef
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried mint
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Salt to taste
- Pepper to taste
- 1 container (8 ounces) yogurt or sour cream
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

In a large skillet, brown the ground meat with the onion and garlic; pour off excess fat. Stir in the mint, parsley, oregano, cinnamon, salt, and pepper, then the yogurt and lemon juice. Over a medium heat, simmer, covered, for 20 minutes to allow flavors to blend.

NOTE: If the sauce is too thick, you can thin it with some broth or water. Serve over rice or pasta and sprinkle ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley and paprika over the top as a garnish. If you'd like to make it Italian style, add some crushed fennel seed and skip the cinnamon.

Easy Gravy

Homemade gravy is one of our favorite "home comfort" treats. We can have it in minutes anytime we've got this easy mix on hand. And be bold–try a different variation every time.

Gravy Mix

about 1¾ cups dry mix

- 1 jar (2¼ ounces) chicken or beef flavor instant bouillon (about ½ cup)
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon pepper

In a medium-sized storage container or plastic bag, combine all ingredients. Store, tightly covered, at room temperature. Shake or stir before using to make Gravy (see below).

NOTE: For interesting flavor variations add any of the following to the gravy mix: Italian: 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning and ½ teaspoon garlic powder; French: 1½ teaspoons dried tarragon; Southwest: 1½ teaspoons chili powder, ½ teaspoon cumin, and ¼ teaspoon garlic powder.

Gravy

about 1¾ cups

- 3 tablespoons margarine
- ¼ cup Gravy Mix (see above)
- 1¾ cups water or milk

In a medium-sized skillet or saucepan, melt the margarine. Stir Gravy Mix into margarine; cook and stir until golden brown. Add water, then cook and stir until thickened and all the bouillon is dissolved.

NOTE: Serve with meat, poultry, or mashed potatoes.

Spanish Sauce

about 4 cups

Turn an everyday meal into one so homemade special they'll think it's a holiday! It sure works for Spanish adventure . . . you'll see. (And it's basically a bottled spaghetti sauce.)

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 bottle (28 to 32 ounces) prepared spaghetti sauce

In a saucepan, heat olive oil until moderately hot; sauté onion, celery, bell pepper, and garlic until golden. Add parsley and spaghetti sauce to vegetable mixture and heat through.

NOTE: Serve over pasta. I sometimes like to use a chunky spaghetti sauce and bottled garlic and parsley instead of fresh (it's quicker!). I also add a little "heat" (in the form of hot sauces) to spice it up—anything works!

Garlic Sauce

1½ cups

Here's a prize-winning recipe that'll make you a winner every time you use it. That's because anything it's served with becomes steps above regular!

- 5 to 6 garlic cloves, peeled
- 2 egg *yolks*
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup olive oil
- ½ cup fresh basil leaves

In a blender jar, place garlic, egg yolks, lemon juice, mustard, and salt; cover and blend until smooth. With blender running, very slowly pour in olive oil in a thin stream. Turn off blender, add basil, and blend briefly until basil is coarsely chopped.

NOTE: Serve over roasted or grilled meat, chicken, or fish, and cooked or raw vegetables. I especially like it over summer tomatoes, cucumbers, and sweet onions. As with any dish containing raw eggs, be sure to store the sauce in the refrigerator until ready to use. If you have any concern over using a recipe containing raw eggs, then skip this one.

Baked Cranberry Sauce

about 2½ cups

Once you see how easy and delicious this sauce is, cranberries won't be just for Thanksgiving anymore!

- 4 cups cranberries (one 12-ounce bag is about 3 cups)
- 2 cups sugar
- ¼ cup water

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a 9" × 13" glass baking dish, stir together the cranberries, sugar, and water. Cover dish with foil and cook for 50 to 60 minutes, stirring occasionally, until cranberries pop. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Dill Sauce

2 cups

Have any leftover meat, fish, or chicken? Wanna do something a little different with it? Well, cut it into chunks and serve it with this sauce, and they'll think you started from scratch! And we know how well dill goes with lots of things . . . so it's a sure winner.

- 1 envelope (1.25 ounces) Hollandaise sauce mix
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon dried dillweed
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ⅛ teaspoon salt (or to taste)

In a saucepan, prepare Hollandaise sauce according to package directions. Mix in remaining ingredients. Transfer to serving bowl and refrigerate until ready to use.

NOTE: This sauce is also great served with chunked vegetables.

Cheesy Dill Sauce

3 cups

Here's dill again!! Make everyday fish or steak into something special—and it's so easy to do! There's plenty of room for playing with extra or different spices, too.

- 2½ cups mayonnaise
- ¾ cup sour cream
- Juice of 1 lime or lemon
- 3 tablespoons snipped fresh dill
- 2 teaspoons pepper
- 1 garlic clove, mashed
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup finely minced onion

Place all ingredients in a large bowl and mix. Store in refrigerator until ready to use.

NOTE: If you add 2 tablespoons milk, this will make a great salad dressing. For a little different taste, try adding 1 teaspoon sweet pickle relish.

Portuguese Sauce

about 2½ cups

Here's a way to make a plain ol' piece of meat, chicken, or fish come alive with the exotic flavors of Portugal. When the sauce is mixed with a little imagination, you can travel to a faraway place, without leaving your dinner table. I've been using this a lot lately!

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 can (28 ounces) whole peeled tomatoes, drained
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ½ cup chopped black olives
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley

In a large skillet, heat olive oil; sauté onion over medium heat just until softened. Add tomatoes, garlic, bay leaf, thyme, red pepper, and sugar. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in olives and parsley and cook for 10 minutes more. *Remove bay leaf before serving.*

NOTE: Serve with steak, fish, or chicken.

Old-Time Hot Dog Sauce

10 servings

Remember those great Fourth of July celebrations when you were a kid? With hot dogs from the barbecue that were topped with just the right sauce? Well, we can have a summer full of new tastes from this old Coney Island–type favorite!

- ½ pound ground beef
- 1 medium-sized onion, chopped
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

In a large skillet, sauté ground beef and onion over medium heat, stirring often, until beef is browned. Add tomato sauce, chili powder, and Worcestershire sauce. Bring mixture to a boil, lower heat, and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

NOTE: For a real taste treat, place cooked hot dogs on rolls and top with sauce; you should have enough for about 10. Add your favorite regular toppings, too. To make the sauce taste as if it came from a New York pushcart, add a little cinnamon. Oregano will give it a Greek or Italian flavor and a teaspoon of ground cumin will make it an authentic chili dog.

Soups and Chowders

Nothing says "Mama" more than soup. Remember those bowls full of that good stuff that tasted better and better the closer we got to the bottom of the bowl?

Whether it was the soup so thick you could eat it with a fork, or that thin, clear soup dotted with fresh greens, we could use it as a filler or make it into a whole meal. (Those are the two schools of soup lovers, you know—the "thicks" and the "thins"!)

Sure, a large bowl of soup, some crusty bread to dunk in it, a salad, maybe a chunk of cheese . . . it's a whole meal (and so down-home easy!). The down-home part is so adaptable, too, 'cause by simply adding things like Mama did we can change the whole character of the soup.

For instance, a shake of oregano and fennel seed will give your soup an Italian sausage flavor. With a bay leaf and caraway seed, it's German. With a couple tablespoons of soy sauce and a shake of ginger . . . Oriental.

If your base soup doesn't call for carrots and you've got extras, go ahead! They'll give it your own

touch. Who knows? It might be better than the original. See what I mean?? Inexpensive, warming, welcoming, delicious soup. It's Mama's tastes all over again—but so much easier today . . . you'll see.

So, experiment, play, enjoy! You'll surely bring back that satisfied feeling.

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Creole Fish Chowder

4 servings

Here's a no-fuss way to serve up a cozy meal at the end of a busy work day—and it's all in one pot. And the best part about it is everyone will think you fussed! With some crusty bread and a salad?? WOW!!

- ½ cup chopped onion
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 cans (8 ounces each) tomato sauce
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 can (28 ounces) whole tomatoes
- 1 bag (16 ounces) frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 pound frozen fish fillets, thawed slightly and chunked

In a soup pot, combine the onion, cayenne pepper, tomato sauce, garlic powder, bay leaves, and whole tomatoes; simmer for 10 minutes. Add frozen vegetables and simmer for 10 minutes more. Add fish; cover and simmer for another 8 to 10 minutes or until fish flakes with a fork. *Be sure to remove bay leaves before serving.*

NOTE: If you want, you can use fresh fish instead of frozen. Or for a change, you can use canned stewed tomatoes and add your favorite seasonings to spice it up. It's so easy!

Coastline Chowder

8 servings

Here's the "anything goes" way they make chowder along the coast. No fancy rules and regulations, just throw in whatever fish you have on hand–and serve up a hearty chowder rich enough to be the whole meal!

- 5 cups water
- 1 can (14½ ounces) tomatoes, whole or crushed
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato paste
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 medium-sized onion, chopped
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 1 celery stalk, chopped
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh parsley
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 teaspoons salt
- Pepper to taste
- Dash hot pepper sauce (optional)
- 2 pounds fresh or frozen fish fillets or a combination of fillets and seafood, thawed

In a soup pot, combine all ingredients, *except* fish; bring to a boil. Lower heat and cook, uncovered, for 20 to 30 minutes, until vegetables are tender. Cut fish into large chunks; add to pot and bring just to boiling. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 8 to 10 minutes more or until fish flakes with a fork. *Before serving, remove bay leaves and discard.*

NOTE: Serve with fresh, crusty bread and butter or sharp cheese.

Southwestern Chowder

10 to 12 servings

Easy, easy, easy!! But will they like it? You can bet on it . . . it's like stacking the deck so everybody wins.

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ½ pound smoked turkey or turkey ham, cubed
- 1 to 2 large onions, chopped
- 6 cups (about 2½ pounds) potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 2 quarts water
- 2½ cups (about 5 6-ounce cans) tomato paste
- 2 cups mild picante sauce
- 1 package (12 ounces) American cheese, cubed

In a soup pot, combine oil, turkey, and onions; cook until onions are soft. Add potatoes, water, tomato paste, and picante sauce. Bring mixture to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer, covered, for about 20 to 30 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Stir in cheese and simmer until cheese melts completely. Serve immediately.

Zesty Tomato Soup

4 to 5 servings

Tomato soup won't be dull and ordinary once we add these special touches. Why, it'll be fancy enough to serve to company! (But make it even when it's just the family, 'cause they're special, too!)

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter
- ½ cup chopped onion
- ½ cup chopped green bell pepper
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons instant beef bouillon
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- 2½ cups milk
- 1 can (14½ ounces) stewed tomatoes, puréed

In a soup pot, melt the butter; sauté onion and green pepper until tender, about 5 minutes. Add flour, bouillon, salt, and pepper and stir until smooth. Remove from heat and gradually stir in milk. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly, for about 1 minute. Stir in puréed tomatoes and heat to serving temperature.

NOTE: Serve with your favorite sandwich. To make the soup homier, you can add cooked rice and get Tomato Rice Soup. You can also add cooked broccoli or green beans and call it Garden Tomato Soup.

Shortcut Potato Soup

6 to 8 servings

This tastes like Mama's old-fashioned potato soup, except that I add potato flakes to thicken it even more–in less time. (And, like Mama's, it's even better the second day!)

- 1½ cups diced onion
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter or margarine
- 4 cups large-diced potatoes (about 2 to 2½ pounds)
- 1 carrot, coarsely grated
- 2 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried dillweed
- 3 cups milk
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ cup potato flakes

In a large saucepan, brown the onion in the butter. Add the potatoes, carrot, water, salt, pepper, and dillweed. Cook on low until potatoes are creamy, about 45 minutes. Stir in the milk and parsley and continue cooking until mixture is heated through. Stir in the potato flakes.

NOTE: If you'd like, add frozen peas or broccoli at the milk stage.

Mexican Bean Soup

6 to 8 servings

From coast to coast, everybody loves the taste of Mexico. And most everybody loves soup! Well, here's an easy one that you can enjoy without even nearing the border.

- ½ pound ground beef
- 1 medium-sized onion, chopped
- 1 can (14½ ounces) whole tomatoes, chopped
- 1 can (15 ounces) red kidney beans
- 1 can (7 to 8 ounces) kernel corn
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1½ cups water
- Crushed tortilla chips for topping (optional)

In a large saucepan, brown beef with onion. Stir in remaining ingredients and simmer for about 30 minutes. Serve topped with crushed tortilla chips.

NOTE: I sometimes add ½ teaspoon cumin and a few shakes of hot pepper sauce to "heat it up."

Easy Mushroom Barley Soup

8 to 10 servings

On a cold winter night, there's nothing better than a hearty bowl of soup. With a salad and some bread, it's a whole meal! And when it's everybody's Mama's thick, rich mushroom soup there's really nothing better. Here's her basic one, but she used to throw a lot of extras in, depending on what leftovers needed a home.

- 4 large onions, chopped
- 6 large carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 pound mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 1 pound stew beef, cut into small cubes
- 8 cups beef broth (made from a soup base or a mix)
- 1 cup medium barley
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Place all ingredients in a soup pot and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat and simmer, partially covered, for about 1 hour.

NOTE: If you'd like, add 1 or 2 shots of Irish whiskey with the other ingredients for added flavor. It'll make it really Irish! In addition to the base recipe ingredients, you might want to add some cut-up hot dogs and a teaspoon of caraway seed for German-style soup. Or you can even add ½ teaspoon each of oregano and rosemary for Italian-style soup.

Bean Chili

about 12 cups

Here's a favorite chili recipe of mine that gets more raves and cheers than there are beans in the pot. This is another one that makes a whole meal when served with a salad–but it makes a great chili chowder side dish, too!

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 cup picante sauce
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 2 cans (28 ounces each) crushed tomatoes (or whole tomatoes, chopped)
- 1 can (15 ounces) pinto beans, drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) red kidney beans, drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) black-eyed peas, drained
- 1 teaspoon cumin

In a large saucepan or Dutch oven, heat the olive oil; add onion and sauté until softened. Add remaining ingredients, bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes.

NOTE: Add some browned meat or sausage and it's a straight, fast chili. I sometimes use a little salt or garlic to give it a "tang." If you have a favorite combination of beans, they'll work fine, too.

Chinese Soups

Everybody thinks there's something mysterious about making those wonderful soups we get in Chinese restaurants. Well, they're just good old-fashioned chicken soup. Of course, if you really want the secret to the Chinese soup mystery . . . it's what they put in afterward that makes the difference! Well, take a look.

Egg Drop Soup

4 servings

- 3½ cups water
- 1 envelope (2.25 ounces) chicken noodle soup mix
- 1 egg, beaten

In a medium-sized saucepan, bring the water to a boil; stir in soup mix. Reduce heat and simmer for 5 to 10 minutes. With a fork, quickly stir in the egg, a little at a time, until it congeals. Serve.

Shortcut Won Ton Soup

4 servings

- 4 cups water
- 1 envelope (2.25 ounces) chicken noodle soup mix
- ½ cup frozen peas
- ½ cup sliced celery
- ¼ pound ham, cut into thin strips
- Sliced scallion for garnish

In a large saucepan, combine the water, soup mix, peas, and celery. Bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Add ham and stir. Serve topped with scallion.

NOTE: If you add crisp noodles just before serving, it will be like the soup you love in Chinese restaurants. You can also use cooked chicken or turkey instead of ham. You might even add some pre-cooked meat ravioli during the last few minutes of cooking. Then it'll be similar to the Chinese won ton.

Meatball Soup

4 servings

Remember Mama's meatball soup? Back in the '50s? And how everybody loved it? And how easy it was to make? With a few shortcuts, we can make it even easier and better than before. Yippee!

MEATBALLS

- ½ pound ground beef
- ¼ cup uncooked long-grain rice
- 1 egg, beaten
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper

SOUP

- 3½ cups water
- 1 envelope (1.1 ounces) beefy onion soup mix
- ¼ teaspoon dried thyme

In a large bowl, combine meatball ingredients. Shape mixture into 1-inch meatballs and place on a cookie sheet or waxed paper; set aside. In a saucepan, combine soup ingredients; bring to a boil. Carefully drop meatballs into boiling soup; reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 25 minutes.

NOTE: I sometimes like to use ground turkey or chicken for a lighter change. You can also add cut-up fresh or frozen veggies if you like (whatever ones are left over from last night's supper will work just great).

Scandinavian Cabbage Soup

6 to 8 servings

It may sound exotic, but it tastes delicious and it's so easy to prepare. You'll feel great serving this treat to your family and they'll feel great 'cause they'll think you really fussed! (Only you'll know the truth!) Oh, and talk about reasonable!!

- ½ cup (1 stick) margarine
- 2 cups chopped cabbage
- 1 cup sliced onion
- 1 cup sliced celery
- 1 cup frozen peas, thawed
- 1 cup thin carrot slices
- 1 can (16 ounces) cream-style corn
- 3 cups milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Cheddar cheese

In a large soup pot, melt the margarine; sauté the cabbage, onion, celery, peas, and carrots until tender, about 8 to 10 minutes. Add the corn, milk, salt, pepper, thyme, and garlic powder; simmer for about 15 minutes. Add the cheese, stirring until melted, and serve.

South-of-the-Border Party Soup

4 to 6 servings

How about a throw-together Tex-Mex soup that'll turn your party into a homemade fiesta!!

- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- ½ cup diced red bell pepper
- ½ cup diced green bell pepper
- 2 cans (10¾ ounces each) condensed cream of potato soup
- 10¾ ounces milk (1 soup can)
- ½ cup picante sauce
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¾ cup (3 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- ¾ cup (3 ounces) shredded Cheddar cheese
- Chopped fresh parsley (optional)

In a large saucepan, heat the butter until moderately hot; cook red and green peppers until tender, about 5 minutes. Add soup, milk, picante sauce, and cumin, stirring until smooth. Heat mixture until hot, stirring occasionally (do not boil). Add cheeses, stirring until melted. Ladle into soup bowls and sprinkle with parsley, if desired.

NOTE: Serve with additional picante sauce.

Easy Blueberry Soup

5 to 6 servings

Ever try the chilled blueberry soup the gourmet restaurants serve? Well, they think it's brand new, but Mama made it for years with leftover berries. Sure, she knew how easy it is, also.

- 3 cups plus 2 tablespoons water
- 1 quart fresh blueberries, stemmed, rinsed, and drained
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- Sour cream or yogurt for topping

In a large saucepan, bring the 3 cups water to a boil. Add the blueberries and sugar, stirring just until sugar is dissolved; set aside. In a small bowl, mix together the cornstarch and remaining 2 tablespoons water to make a paste. Add cornstarch mixture to saucepan and return blueberry mixture to a boil. Let cool, then cover and refrigerate. Serve well chilled with a dollop of sour cream or yogurt.

NOTE: For an extra special tang add a squeeze of fresh lemon or lime juice when boiling the blueberries, water, and sugar.

Tropical Fruit Soup

about 4 servings

Cold fruit soup–we'd like to make it but we think it's too much bother. Well, the good news is it's as easy as can be, especially the no-cook ones like this one. So, enjoy! Imagine . . . no cooking!

- ¾ cup canned pineapple chunks, drained (1 8-ounce can)
- 1 small banana
- 1 cup pear, peach, or apricot fruit juice nectar, chilled
- ½ cup half-and-half, chilled
- Kiwi slices for garnish

In a blender jar, combine the pineapple chunks and banana; purée. Add the nectar and half-and-half and blend just until mixed. Chill thoroughly before serving. Garnish with kiwi slices.

Chilled Strawberry Soup

about 4 servings

Want a great way to use those beautiful fresh strawberries? Wanna be the envy of all your friends? Well, just make this easy, delicious soup and you'll accomplish both!

- 2 cups crushed fresh strawberries
- ½ cup sugar
- ¾ cup ginger ale

In a large bowl, mix together all ingredients. Refrigerate. Serve chilled. (Now, can it be any easier than that??)

Chicken and Turkey

There's no question that poultry has grown to be one of our most popular choices today. And why not? Not only are so many people now into "light" foods, but it's also become one of our best values.

When Mama and Grandma made it, it was something of a luxury . . . "a chicken in the pot every Sunday." Well, today it's less expensive than ever. With our new growing and transportation methods, we can always buy chicken in a variety of ways—from whole to just our favorite parts. It's readily available and usually on sale in some form or other for even better value. Ditto for turkey. So, it's no longer just a holiday-time treat.

It's always a treat 'cause it fits our lifestyle so perfectly: It's versatile and fast, too. There's always some quick way we can make chicken or turkey (depending on what parts we use or how it's cut, of course)—in the oven, on top of the stove, or on the grill.

No matter who we make it for, sometimes all it takes to please them is a little "sprinkle of this" or a

"shake of that." We can have Mama-style chicken and turkey that's healthier and easier than ever. Go ahead, make it whole, in parts, in sandwiches, casseroles, or whatever . . . but make it soon 'cause they'll love it!

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Timetable for Roasting Chicken at 350°F.

Parts	Approximate Weight	Final Meat Thermometer Reading (in degrees F.)	Approximate Cooking Time* (in minutes)
Whole (unstuffed)	3½ lbs.	185 to 190	1 hr. 15 min.
(stuffed)	3½ lbs.	185 to 190	1 hr. 40 min.
(cut-up)†	3½ lbs.	180	50 to 60
4 Thighs	4½ to 6½ oz. each	180	45 to 50
4 Thighs (boneless)	3½ to 5½ oz. each	160	30 to 35
4 Breast Halves	8 to 10 oz. each	180	50 to 55
4 Breast Halves (boneless)	5 to 7 oz. each	160	30 to 35
4 Drumsticks	3½ to 5½ oz. each	180	45 to 50
4 Leg-Thigh combinations	8½ to 10½ oz. each	185 to 190	50 to 55
4 Quarters (2 breasts, 2 leg-thighs)	12 to 14 oz. each	185 to 190	60 to 65

*Cooking times are based on chicken taken directly from the refrigerator.

†Approximate weight of pieces of a cut-up 3½-lb. broiler-fryer chicken:

Thighs	5 to 6 oz. each
Drumsticks	3½ to 4 oz. each
Breasts with rib (halves)	9 to 10 oz. each
Wings	3 to 4 oz. each
Whole back	8 to 9 oz. each

Courtesy of the National Broiler Council

Timetable for Roasting a Whole Turkey

As simple as 1–2–3!

Turkey is one of today's best meat buys, both nutritionally and economically. Whole turkeys are sold oven-ready: dressed, washed, inspected, and packaged. After turkeys leave the processing plant, no hands touch them until time for kitchen preparation.

It takes only 6 minutes to prepare a defrosted whole turkey for roasting (without stuffing).

If stuffing is desired, it's often best prepared separately, placed in a covered casserole, and cooked with the turkey during the last hour of roasting time.

Follow label instructions for roasting, or use these simple directions to obtain a beautiful golden brown, ready-to-carve-and-eat turkey:

1. Thawing: (If turkey is not frozen, begin with step 2.) *Do not thaw poultry at room temperature.* Leave turkey in original packaging and use one of the following methods:

No hurry: Place wrapped turkey on tray in refrigerator for 3 to 4 days; allow 5 hours per pound of turkey to completely thaw.

Fastest: Place wrapped turkey in sink and cover with cold water. Allow about ½ hour per pound of turkey to completely thaw. Change water frequently.

Refrigerate or cook turkey when it is thawed. Refreezing uncooked turkey is not recommended.

Commercially frozen stuffed turkeys should *not* be thawed before roasting.

2. Preparation for roasting: All equipment and materials used for storage, preparation, and serving of poultry must be clean. Wash hands thoroughly with hot soapy water before and after handling raw poultry. Use hard plastic or acrylic cutting boards to prepare poultry.

Remove plastic wrapping from thawed turkey. Remove giblets and neck from the body and neck cavities. To remove neck, it may be necessary to release legs from band of skin or wire hock lock. Rinse turkey inside and out with cool water, pat dry with a paper towel, and return legs to hock lock or band of skin; or tie together loosely. Tuck tips of wings under back of turkey. Neck skin should be skewered with a poultry pin or round toothpick to back of turkey

to provide a nice appearance for serving at table. The turkey is now completely ready for roasting.

3. Open pan roasting: Place turkey breast-side up on flat rack in shallow roasting pan, about 2 inches deep. Insert meat thermometer deep into thickest part of thigh next to body, not touching bone.

Brush turkey skin with vegetable oil to prevent drying. Turkey is done when meat thermometer registers 180 to 185°F. and drumstick is soft and moves easily at joint.

Once skin of turkey is golden brown, shield breast loosely with rectangular-shaped piece of lightweight foil to prevent overbrowning.

Roasting at 325°F.

Approximate Weight (in pounds)	Approximate Cooking Time* (in hours)
6 to 8	2¼ to 3¼
8 to 12	3 to 4
12 to 16	3½ to 4½
16 to 20	4 to 5
20 to 24	4½ to 5½

*Approximate Roasting Time: Factors affecting roasting times are type of oven, oven temperature, and degree of thawing. Begin checking turkey for doneness about one hour before end of recommended roasting time.

Courtesy of the California Turkey Industry Board

Very Ritzy Italian Chicken

4 to 6 servings

It's so fancy you won't believe how easy it is! The best part of this one is that you can make it (and clean it up!) ahead of time. That leaves plenty of time to enjoy all the applause! And no, it's not low in calories, but it sure is right for that special time or special person.

- 3 whole chicken breasts, split, skinned, and boned
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 cup seasoned bread crumbs
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 6 slices mozzarella cheese
- 1 pint heavy cream
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- Salt to taste
- Pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350°F. Dip the chicken breasts in the eggs. Place the bread crumbs in a shallow bowl; coat the chicken with the bread crumbs. In a large skillet, heat the oil until moderately hot. Place the chicken in the frying pan and brown lightly on both sides. Remove from pan and place in a baking dish. Top each breast with a slice of mozzarella cheese. In a saucepan, mix together the heavy cream, Parmesan cheese, parsley, salt, and pepper. Cook until mixture is hot and has thickened. Pour over chicken and bake for 25 minutes or until cheese is melted and light golden.

NOTE: This is great served over pasta. Sometimes I get the whole dish together and put it aside in the refrigerator for a day or two. Then, 30 minutes before I'm ready to serve it, I bake it. Sometimes I'll sprinkle a little nutmeg or paprika on top for a little different taste.

President's Chicken

4 servings

You can't beat these flavor combinations. The taste will make all *your company feel special (and wait 'til you tell them what it's called!).*

SAUCE

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter or margarine
- Juice of 1 lemon
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

- 4 whole chicken breasts, skinned and boned

Preheat oven to broil. In a large skillet, mix together sauce ingredients; cook over low heat until butter has melted. Place chicken breasts in a shallow baking dish; pour sauce over the chicken. Broil for 30 to 35 minutes or until done, turning chicken occasionally to coat well with sauce.

NOTE: Serve over rice or noodles and drizzle with the pan drippings for a delicious flavor boost. You can use chicken breasts with the bone in and even leave the skin on but, if you do, remember to cook them a little longer.

Olympics Chicken

4 servings

This unusual dish was a contest winner named for the Seoul Olympics. It's got rich, full Korean flavors in every bite. With Oriental flavors being so popular, it's really a winner–and so easy, too!

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 8 chicken thighs, skinned
- 10 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- ¼ cup white vinegar
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons honey
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger

In a large skillet, heat the oil until moderately hot. Add the chicken and cook until brown on all sides, about 10 minutes. Add garlic and red pepper to chicken; cook for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drain off excess fat. In a small bowl, mix together the vinegar, soy sauce, honey, and ginger; add to the chicken. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 15 to 20 minutes or until chicken is fork-tender and fully cooked.

NOTE: Serve with rice. When cooked, the garlic becomes mellow and is not overpowering. However, if you prefer, you can start with 2 garlic cloves and ¼ teaspoon red pepper. Adapt it to your own taste!

Crunchy Chicken

4 servings

Chicken breasts sautéed with a nut coating may sound trendy but once you taste this one, you'll want to keep it around as one of your Southern home-cooking standards. Heck! We were making it this way before pecans became so "in"!

- 1 cup pecans, finely ground
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon dried basil
- Lemon juice for dipping
- 2 whole chicken breasts, split, skinned, boned, and flattened
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

In a large shallow dish, combine pecans, cheese, garlic salt, and basil. Place lemon juice in another shallow dish; dip chicken in juice, then coat with pecan mixture. In a large nonstick skillet, heat oil until moderately hot. Add the chicken; cook for 3 to 5 minutes on each side or until golden and cooked through.

NOTE: Sometimes I like to use turkey, veal, or pork cutlets instead of chicken. (Remember to flatten them!) For different flavors I try different nuts and sometimes I add a little pepper to make the dish spicier. I even use lime juice instead of lemon for variety.

My Own Sausage Burgers

(or . . . My Own Turkey Sausage)

4 to 6 patties

Yes, ground turkey is usually somewhat bland, but not if it's seasoned well. So, how about using it to make your own Italian sausage burgers? That ought to make them sit up and take notice! And the lean of the ground turkey mixed with these seasonings is everything we want today.

- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 tablespoons bread crumbs
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon fennel seed, crushed
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

In a large bowl, mix together all ingredients. Form mixture into patties and broil, grill, or pan-fry in vegetable oil until meat is done and no longer pink.

Cheesy Chicken'

4 servings

There really couldn't be an easier way to make such great-tasting chicken. It only takes 3 ingredients–that's right, three! Easy enough!

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter or margarine, melted
- 2 whole chicken breasts, split (skinned, if desired)
- 3 cups cheese crackers, crushed

Preheat oven to 350°F. Place melted butter in a shallow dish; roll chicken breasts in butter, then in cracker crumbs. Arrange chicken pieces in a baking dish. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes, until chicken is fork tender and fully cooked.

NOTE: To cook in the microwave, prepare as above. Cover the baking dish with waxed paper and microwave on high for 12 to 15 minutes. Rotate dish ½ turn after the first 6 or 7 minutes. Let stand, covered, for 2 to 3 minutes before serving. Please remember that cooking time may vary slightly depending on the wattage of your microwave. When you use the microwave try putting the dish under the broiler for a few minutes to brown the chicken up a bit; then it's really "cooked."

"Remember" Chicken

4 to 6 servings

These tastes and aromas will surely take you back to the days when Mama spent all day in the kitchen. This chicken is truly, truly that memorable.

- 1 3- to 4-pound chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- Flour as needed (seasoned with a little salt, pepper, and paprika)
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 2 cans (15½ ounces each) black-eyed peas
- ½ cup chicken broth
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 medium tomato, chopped

Rinse chicken, pat dry with paper towels, and coat with seasoned flour. In a Dutch oven, heat butter and oil; add chicken and cook slowly, until golden brown on both sides. Remove chicken and keep warm. Sauté onion in the Dutch oven until tender, about 5 minutes. Add black-eyed peas, chicken broth, and oregano; bring to a boil. Arrange chicken over the black-eyed pea mixture, pressing the chicken into the peas. Sprinkle tomato over the top; reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 35 to 40 minutes or until chicken is fork-tender and fully cooked.

NOTE: For a different taste, try water or wine instead of the chicken broth. You can also use any canned beans—great Northern, cannellini, limas, etc.—whichever is on hand or on sale. And, instead of oregano, why not try tarragon or thyme? There are so many options with this dish and they're all delicious!

Mustard-Topped Turkey Cutlets

2 to 3 servings

I guarantee this'll be a treat you'll want to repeat and repeat. The reason!? Easy turkey and plenty of easy seasonings. (The Pilgrims never had it so good!!)

- 4 to 5 turkey breast cutlets (about 1 pound)
- 2 teaspoons vegetable or olive oil
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons seasoned bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
- ¼ teaspoon sugar

Preheat oven to broil. Brush turkey cutlets with the oil on both sides. In a small bowl, combine mayonnaise, bread crumbs, wine, mustard, and sugar; set aside. Place turkey on broiling pan; broil 6 inches from heat source for about 3 minutes on each side, until done and no pink remains. Spread mustard mixture over turkey; broil for 1½ to 2 minutes more or until topping is hot and golden brown.

Chicken Hash

8 to 10 servings

This is so good with leftover chicken or turkey that you'll probably want to make it even when there are no leftovers. That's OK, because it's great with store-bought, precooked chicken or turkey, too!

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter or margarine
- 3 cups diced onions
- 3 cups diced red and/or green bell pepper
- 5 cups diced cooked chicken or turkey (about 1¾ to 2 pounds)
- 4 cups peeled, diced cooked potatoes (about 2 to 2½ pounds)
- 1 can (10¾ ounces) cream of celery soup
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 egg, beaten
- ⅓ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 400°F. In a Dutch oven, melt the butter; add onions and sauté until tender, about 5 minutes on medium-high heat. Add the red and/or green peppers, chicken, potatoes, soup, salt, and pepper; cook, stirring occasionally, until mixture is heated through, about 10 minutes. Coat a 9"x13" baking dish with nonstick vegetable spray; spoon in chicken mixture. Brush egg over top of mixture, then sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes or until golden.

Nice-Crust Chicken

6 servings

This one's a nice crunchy change from regular roasted chicken 'cause the crust is like the "treat" part.

- 3 whole chicken breasts, split and skinned
- ¼ cup prepared mustard
- 1 cup bread crumbs
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon dried minced onion
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 to 3 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
- 6 tablespoons sour cream or plain low-fat yogurt

Preheat oven to 350°F. Brush the chicken breasts with mustard; set aside. In a large shallow dish, mix together the bread crumbs, Parmesan cheese, onion, salt, garlic powder, and oregano. Roll the chicken in the bread crumb mixture to coat. Place chicken in a large, lightly greased baking pan, meaty side up. Drizzle chicken with melted butter. Bake, uncovered, for 50 minutes or until fork-tender. Arrange chicken on a serving dish and top with sour cream or yogurt.

Southwest Chicken

6 to 8 servings

Whether you need something fancy or homey, these campfire flavors can't be beat to bring back that "'round-the-campfire" feel.

- 4 whole chicken breasts, split, skinned, and boned
- Salt to taste (optional)
- ¼ cup chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon hot pepper sauce
- 1 cup barbecue sauce
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin

Preheat oven to 375°F. Place chicken breasts in a large baking dish; sprinkle with salt, if desired. In a small bowl, combine the chicken broth and hot pepper sauce; pour mixture over chicken. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, turning once; remove pan from oven. In another small bowl, combine barbecue sauce, oregano, and cumin; brush over chicken. Bake for 10 minutes more or until fully cooked.

NOTE: Serve with flour tortillas, chopped tomatoes and onions, and maybe even sour cream and avocados for a make-your-own buffet.

Chicken with Chunky Sauce

4 servings

When you're feeling adventurous, try this chicken dish with a yummy twist. It'll be fun to keep them guessing about just how you did it!

- 2 whole chicken breasts, split, skinned, and boned
- ¼ cup cornmeal
- 1½ teaspoons dry mustard
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon seafood seasoning (to taste)
- 2 to 3 tablespoons vegetable oil

CUCUMBER SAUCE

- 1 bottle (8 ounces) ranch dressing
- 1 medium-sized cucumber, peeled, seeded, and chopped
- 2 scallions, chopped
- ½ teaspoon dried dillweed

Remove the fillet from bottom of each chicken breast half; take out tough white tendon. Cut each chicken breast piece in half lengthwise (do not cut the fillets). (There should be a total of 12 pieces of chicken.) In a large shallow dish, combine the cornmeal, dry mustard, nutmeg, cayenne pepper, and seafood seasoning; dip chicken pieces into mixture. In a skillet, heat the oil until moderately hot; sauté the chicken pieces until golden. Combine all the sauce ingredients in a medium-sized bowl; mix well. Warm (do not cook) the sauce either on the stove or in the microwave, and serve under or over the chicken.

NOTE: This makes about 1⅓ cups cucumber sauce, which you might want to try with other chicken or fish dishes.

Easy Turkey Divan

4 servings

During the cooler months it's time to think of casseroles. We certainly don't mind lighting the stove, and there's something right about a bubbling dish on a winter table. And they're so easy–like Turkey Divan. Sounds fancy, doesn't it? Well, try this!

- 1 pound cooked boneless turkey breast
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen broccoli spears, thawed
- 1 can (10¾ ounces) condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese
- 2 tablespoons dry sherry
- ⅛ teaspoon nutmeg

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cut turkey into ¼-inch slices; set aside. Coat a 6"x10" baking dish with nonstick vegetable spray. Place the broccoli in the baking dish and top with the turkey slices. In a medium-sized bowl, combine the soup, cheese, sherry, and nutmeg; spread over the turkey. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, until bubbling and brown.

NOTE: To make this casserole in the microwave, assemble as above. Cover the baking dish with plastic wrap recommended for microwaves and microwave on high for 4 to 5 minutes. Rotate the baking dish and continue cooking on high for 4 to 5 minutes more or until done. Please remember that cooking time may vary slightly according to the wattage of your microwave.

Chicken "Spareribs"

4 main-dish servings

Now you can get the great flavor of restaurant spareribs at home–and with chicken! How about that?!

- 1 to 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 8 chicken thighs, skinned
- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon water
- ⅓ cup soy sauce
- ⅓ cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
- ¼ cup apple juice
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

In a nonstick skillet, heat oil until moderately hot. Add chicken and lightly brown on all sides for about 6 to 7 minutes, turning frequently. In a large bowl, combine the ½ cup water, soy sauce, light brown sugar, apple juice, ketchup, cider vinegar, garlic, red pepper, and ginger; add to chicken. Bring to a boil, cover, then reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes. In a small bowl, blend cornstarch and remaining 1 tablespoon water. Add to chicken and cook, stirring, until sauce thickens and glazes chicken pieces.

NOTE: Serve warm as an appetizer or as a main course over hot cooked rice. Garnish with sliced scallions, if desired. For a change, you can even use chicken wings instead of thighs.

Skillet Stew

about 4 servings

It's quick, but it's still got an old-fashioned taste. And by changing the seasonings, you can get a different taste each time: Add a touch of ginger for a trip to the Orient, some oregano and thyme for a trip to the Mediterranean. You get the idea–make your own adventure!

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 medium-sized onion, chopped
- 1 can (14½ ounces) stewed tomatoes
- 3 cups chunked cooked chicken or turkey
- 1 medium-sized green bell pepper, cut into chunks
- 1 can (7 or 8 ounces) whole kernel corn, drained
- ¾ cup picante sauce
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon salt

In a large skillet, heat the oil; add the onion and cook until tender, about 3 minutes. Add tomatoes, breaking up large pieces with a wooden spoon. Stir in remaining ingredients; simmer for 10 minutes or until green pepper is crisp-tender.

NOTE: Serve plain or over rice. For a change, you might want to add a drained can of garbanzo beans (chick peas) or white beans.

Chicken Parmesan

4 servings

Delicious . . . but think it's too hard to make at home? Uh-Uh! Not this way!

- 2 whole chicken breasts, split, skinned, and boned
- 2 cans (14½ ounces each) Italian-style stewed tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 425°F. Place chicken breasts in an 8-inch square baking dish that has been coated with nonstick vegetable spray and bake for 15 to 20 minutes. Meanwhile, in a saucepan, combine tomatoes, cornstarch, and oregano; cook over a medium heat, stirring constantly, until sauce thickens. Pour heated sauce over chicken and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake for 5 minutes more (just long enough to melt the Parmesan cheese).

NOTE: I also like to add a touch of hot pepper sauce, basil, or a sprinkle of garlic. I sometimes top the chicken with mozzarella cheese slices during the last few minutes of baking to make it even more "authentic."

Farm Chicken

4 servings

Dinner the way it was "down on the farm"–only in a lot less time. And wait 'til you hear all that lip-smacking . . . just like from Mama's chicken!

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 3- to 3½-pound chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- Salt to taste
- Black pepper to taste
- 1 large green bell pepper, diced
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen peas

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil. Season the chicken with salt and black pepper and place it in the skillet; brown on all sides. Remove the chicken and set aside. Place the green pepper, onion, and garlic in the skillet and cook for about 5 minutes or until softened, stirring frequently. Return the chicken to the skillet, cover, and cook over a medium-low heat for 45 to 50 minutes, stirring often. Gently stir in the frozen peas and cook for another 5 minutes.

NOTE: Serve with potatoes, rice, or noodles.

Five-Minute Chicken

4 to 6 servings

Perfect when you need that special meal in a hurry. It's even rich-tasting, too . . . I promise! Afterward the shock comes when you tell them it took only 5 minutes!

- 1 2-½- to 3-pound chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 can (11 ounces) Cheddar cheese soup
- 1 can (about 4 ounces) sliced or button mushrooms
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- Salt to taste
- Pepper to taste
- Paprika for garnish

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 9"x13" baking dish with nonstick vegetable spray. Arrange the chicken pieces in baking dish; set aside. In a large bowl, mix together the mayonnaise, soup, mushrooms, wine, garlic, parsley, curry powder, salt, and pepper; pour mixture over chicken. Bake for 1 to 1¼ hours, until done. Sprinkle with paprika just before serving.

"White Hat" Chili

6 to 8 servings

Since everybody loves chili, here's a lighter version to make them all happy. Served with lots of fun go-alongs, this is bound to become a regular favorite.

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 medium-sized onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 whole chicken breasts, skinned, boned, and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 can (15 to 20 ounces) white kidney beans (cannellini), drained
- 1 can (15 to 19 ounces) garbanzo beans, drained
- 1 can (16 to 17 ounces) whole kernel corn, drained
- 2 cans (4 ounces each) chopped mild green chilies
- 1 can (10½ ounces) chicken broth or soup
- Hot pepper sauce to taste

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a small skillet, heat the oil until moderately hot; add onion, garlic, and cumin and sauté just until onion is soft. In a 2½-quart casserole, combine onion mixture with chicken, kidney and garbanzo beans, corn, chilies, and broth; bake for about 1¼ hours or until chicken is tender and cooked through, stirring occasionally. Before serving chili, stir in hot pepper sauce.

NOTE: Serve over cooked rice. For a change, you can use ¼ cup picante sauce instead of the chilies, or prepare a packaged soup mix and use instead of canned soup.

Turkey Joes

6 servings

Remember Sloppy Joes? They were a simple and quick meal that everybody loved. Well, ground turkey really fits today's light tastes, but these work with any type meat or buns. (They're fun eating, too!)

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1 cup chopped onion
- ½ cup chopped celery
- ½ cup chopped green bell pepper
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- ¾ cup water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Black pepper to taste
- Dash hot pepper sauce (optional)

In a large skillet, heat the oil; add the turkey and brown. Add onion, celery, green pepper, and garlic and sauté for 5 minutes, stirring often. Mix in the remaining ingredients and simmer for 30 minutes.

NOTE: Serve on buttered, toasted buns.

Stuffed Chicken Breasts

12 servings

Want to be a holiday hero? Or even an everyday hero? You can always be a hero because this one's a cinch!

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen spinach, thawed and well drained
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil or 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 egg
- Salt to taste
- Pepper to taste
- 6 whole chicken breasts, split and boned (leave skin on)

Preheat oven to 375°F. In a large skillet, heat the vegetable oil until moderately hot; add onion and garlic, cooking just until tender. Stir in spinach, parsley, and basil; heat thoroughly. Remove skillet from heat and let cool to room temperature. In a large bowl, mix together the ricotta and Parmesan cheeses, the egg, salt, and pepper; add the spinach mixture and blend. Place chicken breasts, skin-side up, on a cutting board. Gently loosen skin from one end of each breast, creating a pocket in each. Stuff each pocket with the spinach-cheese mixture and gently press on surface of skin to spread mixture evenly under skin. Tuck ends of skin and meat under the chicken breasts. Place stuffed chicken breasts in a greased baking dish(es) and bake for 35 to 45 minutes or until chicken is done and skin is golden brown. Serve immediately.

NOTE: It's easy to use Stuffed Chicken Breasts as a cold party hors d'oeuvre. Simply cover and refrigerate the cooked breasts until needed; then just before serving, slice into serving-sized pieces.

Chicken Carib

4 servings

Caribbean cooking is one of the current rages in the restaurants. Well, we can make it ourselves for a lot less than them. There's nothing to it–it's easy and delicious, and they'll be raving about the fresh island taste you're serving!

- 1 3- to 4-pound chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
- ¾ cup chicken broth
- ½ cup stuffed green olives, drained and sliced
- ¼ cup light raisins
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon allspice
- 1 green bell pepper, cut into strips

In a large skillet, brown the chicken in the butter. Remove chicken; set aside. Add onion and garlic to skillet; cook until lightly browned. Stir in tomato sauce, chicken broth, olives, raisins, vinegar, chili powder, and allspice. Return chicken to skillet; spoon sauce over chicken, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes. Add the green pepper; cover and cook for 10 minutes more or until chicken is fork-tender and no pink is showing.

NOTE: Serve over hot cooked rice. Dark raisins, bottled garlic, or stuffed olive pieces will work just as well.

Chicken and Sunshine

4 servings

How about something that smacks of the Mediterranean tonight? Or the Caribbean? Or Spain? Or anywhere sunny? And how about something quick? And, of course, delicious? Well, here it is!

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 green bell pepper, thinly sliced
- ⅔ cup sliced scallions
- 2 whole chicken breasts (about 1 pound) split, skinned, and boned
- 1 can (14½ ounces) whole tomatoes
- 1 envelope (0.6 ounces) dry Italian dressing mix
- 1 tablespoon dried basil

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil until moderately hot; stir in the pepper and scallions. Add chicken and cook until browned. Drain tomatoes, reserving ⅓ cup liquid; add tomatoes and reserved liquid to chicken mixture. Sprinkle Italian dressing mix and basil over top. Reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, for about 20 minutes, until chicken is done.

NOTE: If you use cut-up chicken, it's like a quick Chicken Cacciatore. Garnish or season with your favorites.

Sweet-'n'-Saucy Chicken

4 to 6 servings

You want something easy and quick, but fancy-looking–something you'd be proud to serve to your family or company? Well, we all know how easy stir-frying is.

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 whole chicken breasts, skinned, boned, and cut into ¾-inch strips
- 2 carrots, thinly sliced
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- 1 small green bell pepper, chopped

SAUCE

- 1 cup orange juice
- ½ cup bottled chili sauce
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil until moderately hot; add the chicken, carrots, onion, and green pepper. Stir-fry until chicken is cooked through and veggies are tender. In a small bowl, mix sauce ingredients; stir sauce into chicken mixture. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 5 to 6 minutes or until sauce thickens, stirring occasionally. Serve immediately.

NOTE: Serve over cooked noodles or rice. This is great made in a wok, too.

Tandoori Chicken

3 to 4 servings

This is a shortcut version to traditional Indian tandoori chicken.

- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 tablespoon coriander
- ½ teaspoon ground cardamom
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon chili powder
- Dash turmeric
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 3- to 4-pound chicken, cut into 8 pieces

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a bowl, mix together the paprika, coriander, cardamom, salt, onion powder, garlic powder, cayenne pepper, cinnamon, chili powder, and turmeric; stir in the oil, water, and lemon juice. Place the chicken in a 9"x13" baking dish. Brush the spice mixture generously over the chicken and bake for 1 hour. Turn oven to broil and broil chicken, skin-side up, 4 inches from the source of the heat for 5 to 10 minutes or until golden brown.

Slow-Cookin' Chicken

4 to 5 servings

Here's one of Mama's favorites from years gone by–an easy, one-pot dinner that can be made simply by putting it on the stove and letting it slow cook. (That's what she did!) And you can add your own family favorite touches!

- 1 4- to 5-pound chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- 1 can (10¾ ounces) cream of chicken soup
- 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ cup water

Place chicken pieces in a large pot. In a medium-sized bowl, combine the remaining ingredients; mix well. Pour soup mixture over chicken. Bring chicken to a very slow boil; reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 2 hours, stirring occasionally.

NOTE: Serve over rice, noodles, or pasta or with bread for dunking. For a different taste treat, try adding ½ teaspoon of either dillweed, tarragon, caraway, or oregano. You can also add some celery and carrot chunks, or whatever other veggies your family likes.

Chicken Dijon

12 servings

In the mood for an old-time favorite that sounds like fancy-gourmet? Here's how you can serve a really today-type meal that'll make you look like a pro—but quicker, easier, and more exciting!

- 6 whole chicken breasts, split, skinned, and boned
- ⅓ cup Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon dried dillweed or 2 to 3 teaspoons chopped fresh dill
- 12 slices Swiss cheese, cut to about the size of the flattened breasts
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup seasoned bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 350°F. Pound chicken breast pieces until they are ½ inch thick. In a small bowl, combine mustard and dillweed; mix well. Spread mustard mixture evenly over chicken breasts. Top each breast with a slice of Swiss cheese, then tuck and roll them up. Dip chicken breast rolls in the beaten eggs, then in the bread crumbs. Place rolled and coated breasts in a large skillet and sauté in butter until golden brown. Remove breasts from skillet and place in a 9"x13" baking dish that has been coated with nonstick vegetable spray. Sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese and bake for about 25 minutes, until fully cooked.

NOTE: You can also make this dish with chicken or turkey cutlets. Using cutlets is a great way to save time—you don't have to do any pounding. If you prefer, you can use the light versions of the cheeses or butter.

Meats

"What's for dinner?" usually means our main course. It's the center of the plate—the steak, chops, or roast—the part that everybody looks forward to.

Years ago Mama had to go to the butcher every day, and she brought home whatever was most affordable. She could use some of the toughest, cheapest cuts and make them into the richest, most luxurious-tasting meals. Boy, did we look forward to that!

Of course, Mama spent a good part of each day in the kitchen. We can't do that today, so instead we buy what is more appealing and convenient. We can usually pick up something in the market and have it home and ready to go on the table in no time. Or maybe we'll put something together quickly tonight so it's ready to go at dinnertime tomorrow.

Today with our better-than-ever values and our wide variety of choices, we're in for meat main courses that would even delight and amaze Mama!

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Timetable for Roasting Large Beef Roasts

To roast beef roasts: Place beef roast, straight from the refrigerator, fat-side up (if present) on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. Rub with herbs or season, if desired. Insert meat thermometer so the tip is centered in the roast but does not touch bone or fat. Always roast without a cover or the addition of liquid; otherwise the meat will be braised. Remove the roast from the oven when the thermometer registers 10 degrees F. lower than desired; the roast will continue to cook as it stands. Allowing the roast to "stand" for 15 to 20 minutes after roasting makes carving easier.

Cut	Approximate Weight (in pounds)	Oven Temperature (in degrees F.)	Final Meat Thermometer Reading (in degrees F.)	Approximate Cooking Time* (minutes per pound)
Beef Rib Roast	8 to 10	300 to 325	140 (rare) 160 (medium)	19 to 21 23 to 25
Beef Rib Eye Roast	8 to 10	350	140 (rare) 160 (medium)	13 to 15 16 to 18
Beef Tenderloin Roast, Whole	4 to 6	425	140 (rare)	45 to 60 (total cooking time)
Beef Round Tip Roast	8 to 10	300 to 325	140 (rare) 160 (medium)	18 to 22 23 to 25
Beef Top Round Roast	6 to 10	300 to 325	140 (rare) 160 (medium)	17 to 19 22 to 24
Beef Top Loin Roast	7 to 9	300 to 325	140 (rare) 160 (medium)	9 to 11 13 to 15

*Cooking times are based on meat taken directly from the refrigerator.

Courtesy of the Meat Board Test Kitchens

Timetable for Roasting Veal

Roasting is the simplest and the most appropriate cooking method for larger cuts of veal from the loin, sirloin, and rib. A boneless veal shoulder arm, eye round, or rump roast also can be roasted successfully in a slow oven.

To roast veal: Place roast (straight from refrigerator), fat-side up, on rack in open shallow roasting pan. Season before or after cooking. Insert meat thermometer into thickest part of roast, not touching bone or fat. Do not add water. Do not cover. Roast in slow oven (300° to 325°F.) until meat thermometer registers 5 degrees below desired doneness. (Oven does not have to be preheated.) Allow roast to stand for 15 to 20 minutes before serving. Temperature will rise about 5 degrees, and roast will be easier to carve.

Roasting at 300° to 325°F.

Cut	Approximate Weight (in pounds)	Final Meat Thermometer Reading (in degrees F.)	Approximate Cooking Time* (minutes per pound)
Loin	3 to 4	160 (medium)	34 to 36
		170 (well)	38 to 40
Loin (boneless)	2 to 3	160 (medium)	18 to 20
		170 (well)	22 to 24
Rib	4 to 5	160 (medium)	25 to 27
		170 (well)	29 to 31
Crown (12 to 14 ribs)	7½ to 9½	160 (medium)	19 to 21
		170 (well)	21 to 23
Rib Eye	2 to 3	160 (medium)	26 to 28
		170 (well)	30 to 33
Rump (boneless)	2 to 3	160 (medium)	33 to 35
		170 (well)	37 to 40
Shoulder (boneless)	2½ to 3	160 (medium)	31 to 34
		170 (well)	34 to 37

*Cooking times are based on meat taken directly from the refrigerator.

Courtesy of the Beef Board and Veal Committee of the Beef Industry Council

Timetable for Roasting Lamb

To roast lamb: Place lamb, fat-side up, on rack in open roasting pan. Insert meat thermometer so bulb is centered in roast and not touching bone or fat. Do not add water. Do not cover. Roast in slow oven (300° to 325°F.) to desired degree of doneness. Season with salt and pepper if desired.

Cut	Approximate Weight (in pounds)	Final Meat Thermometer Reading (in degrees F.)	Approximate Cooking Time* (minutes per pound)
Leg	7 to 9	140 (rare)	15 to 20
		160 (medium)	20 to 25
		170 (well)	25 to 30
Leg	5 to 7	140 (rare)	20 to 25
		160 (medium)	25 to 30
		170 (well)	30 to 35
Leg (boneless)	4 to 7	140 (rare)	25 to 30
		160 (medium)	30 to 35
		170 (well)	35 to 40
Leg, Shank Half	3 to 4	140 (rare)	30 to 35
		160 (medium)	40 to 45
		170 (well)	45 to 50
Leg, Sirloin Half	3 to 4	140 (rare)	25 to 30
		160 (medium)	35 to 40
		170 (well)	45 to 50
Shoulder† (boneless)	3½ to 5	140 (rare)	30 to 35
		160 (medium)	35 to 40
		170 (well)	40 to 45

Note: Cooking times are based on meat taken directly from the refrigerator.

*Oven not preheated.

†For presliced, bone-in shoulder, add 5 minutes per pound to times recommended for boneless shoulder.

Courtesy of the Lamb Committee of the National Live Stock & Meat Board

Timetable for Roasting Pork

To roast pork: Place pork, fat-side up, on rack in open roasting pan. Rub with herbs or season, if desired. Insert meat thermometer so bulb is centered in roast but does not touch bone or fat. Do not add water. Do not cover. Roast in slow oven (300° to 325°F.), unless instructed otherwise, to 5 degrees below recommended degree of doneness. (Roast continues cooking after removal from oven.) Cover roast with foil tent and let stand for 15 to 20 minutes before carving.

Cut	Approximate Weight (in pounds)	Oven Temperature (in degrees F.)	Final Meat Thermometer Reading (in degrees F.)	Approximate Cooking Time (minutes per pound)
Loin, Center (bone in)	3 to 5	325	160 (medium) 170 (well)	20 to 25 26 to 31
Blade Loin/ Sirloin (boneless, tied)	2½ to 3½	325	170 (well)	33 to 38
Boneless Rib End—Chef's Prime	2 to 4	325	160 (medium) 170 (well)	26 to 31 28 to 33
Top (double)	3 to 4	325	160 (medium) 170 (well)	29 to 34 33 to 38
Top	2 to 4	325	160 (medium) 170 (well)	23 to 33 30 to 40
Crown	6 to 10	325	170 (well)	20 to 25

(Continued)

Cut	Approximate Weight (in pounds)	Oven Temperature (in degrees F.)	Final Meat Thermometer Reading (in degrees F.)	Approximate Cooking Time (minutes per pound)
Leg Whole (bone in)	12	325	170 (well)	23 to 25
Top (inside)	3½	325	170 (well)	38 to 42
Bottom (outside)	3½	325	170 (well)	40 to 45
Blade Boston (boneless)	3 to 4	325	170 (well)	40 to 45
Tenderloin	½ to 1 pound	425	160 (medium) 170 (well)	27 to 29 30 to 32
Backribs		425	tender	1½ to 1¾ hrs.
Country-style Ribs	1" slices	425	tender	1½ to 1¾ hrs.
Spareribs		425	tender	1½ to 1¾ hrs.
Ground Pork Loaf	1 to 1½ pounds	350	170 (well)	55 to 65
Meatballs	1" 2"	350 350	170 (well) 170 (well)	25 to 30 30 to 35

Note: Smaller roasts require more minutes per pound than larger roasts. Cooking times are based on meat taken directly from the refrigerator.

Courtesy of the Meat Board Test Kitchens & Pork Industry Group

Light Beef Stroganoff

4 servings

With everybody watching what they eat these days, wouldn't it be nice if we could eat the things we like and still eat lighter¢! Well, Beef Stroganoff sounds Old World heavy and fancy, but I've changed it a little. I left in the old-fashioned Eastern European taste but made it today smarter!!

- 1 pound lean boneless round steak
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 teaspoon reduced-calorie margarine
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms, fresh or canned
- 3 tablespoons dry red wine
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- ¾ cup beef broth
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon dried dillweed
- 8 ounces plain nonfat yogurt
- 1 pound hot cooked noodles

Partially freeze the steak for easier slicing. Slice it diagonally across the grain into ½-inch slices; set aside. In a large skillet, sauté the onion and garlic in the margarine until tender. Add the steak and mushrooms to skillet; cook, stirring constantly, until steak is browned. Add wine; reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 10 minutes. In a small bowl, dissolve cornstarch in broth; stir broth mixture into steak mixture. Cook, stirring constantly, until smooth and thickened. Remove skillet from heat; stir in pepper, dillweed, and yogurt. Serve over the noodles.

Onion-Crusted Steak

4 servings

Probably one of the most often-asked questions I get is, "What can I do a little different on the grill¢?" Well, here's an old-time trick that'll get raves for being different and easy. It tastes like a steak sandwich with crispy onions right in it.

- 1 can (2.8 ounces) French fried onions
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 4 steaks, about ¼ to ½ pound each, cut ½ inch thick
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

In a blender or food processor or by hand, crush the French fried onions to make crumbs. In a small bowl, stir together the onion crumbs, salt, paprika, and garlic powder. Brush steaks with the oil, dip them in crumb mixture, and place on grill. Cook steaks over high heat to desired degree of doneness, or about 5 minutes per side for medium.

NOTE: Boneless rib eye, strip, or sirloin steaks work just fine. For a change, you can also try hamburger, or pork or lamb chops.

Sweet-and-Sour Pork Chops

4 to 6 servings

For years I looked for the sweet and sour sauce I enjoy so much in Chinese restaurants. THIS IS IT!! It's got the perfect amount of vinegar–not too strong–just right so that everybody loves it. Hooray!! I finally found it!

- 1 can (20 ounces) pineapple chunks, drained, with liquid reserved
- 1¼ cups ketchup
- 1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 3 carrots, sliced into ¼-inch rounds
- ½ green bell pepper, cut into chunks
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 4 to 6 pork loin chops, 1 inch thick

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large saucepan, combine reserved pineapple juice, ketchup, brown sugar, and vinegar; cook for 5 minutes, until hot. Add pineapple chunks, carrots, and green pepper; remove from heat. In a large skillet, heat the oil; add chops and brown. In a shallow baking dish, arrange chops; spread pineapple-vegetable mixture over top. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 1 hour, until chops are done and vegetables are crisp-tender.

NOTE: Serve over rice.

All-in-One Burger

6 to 8 hamburgers

OK, the gang's coming over and we want the burgers to be special. That doesn't have to mean a lot of work, though–you can put all the flavors right in the burgers with just bottled picante sauce!

- 2 pounds ground beef
- ⅓ cup mild picante sauce
- ⅓ cup (1⅓ ounces) shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 teaspoon pepper

In a large mixing bowl, combine all ingredients. Form mixture into patties; layer the patties in aluminum foil and refrigerate to firm them up. Broil, grill, or bake to desired doneness.

NOTE: Serve with your favorite burger or Tex-Mex toppings or just plain on a bun. You can add your own seasonings or try barbecue sauce instead of picante sauce.

One-Pot "Whatever"

(They love the name—and they know they won't get the recipe from you!)

4 to 6 servings

We're always looking for hearty suppers. You can't go wrong with this one. Everybody's Mama had this one in her bag of tricks. Go ahead—there're no rules. Whatever you throw in is just fine!

- 2 pounds beef (shoulder, round, or chuck steak), cut into bite-sized pieces
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter or margarine
- 1 medium-sized onion, cut into wedges
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ½ cup dry red wine
- 2 cans (10½ ounces each) beef broth (or bouillon)

In a large skillet, brown the beef in the butter. Add the onion, celery, mushrooms, garlic, salt, and pepper; reduce heat and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Add the wine and broth; cover and simmer for 1 hour or until meat is tender.

NOTE: Serve over noodles, rice, or slices of garlic bread. You can substitute oil for the butter, bottled garlic for the fresh, or use a different wine.

Taco Casserole

about 4 servings

Here's a great beef casserole recipe that combines easy with Tex-Mex, and you can make it beforehand, then just heat it up.

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 1 small onion, chopped
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 envelope (1.25 ounces) taco seasoning mix
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 2 cups crushed tortilla chips
- 2 cups (8 ounces) grated Monterey Jack cheese

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a skillet, brown the beef, then drain off excess fat; remove from heat. Add onion, garlic powder, taco seasoning mix, and tomato sauce to beef; mix and set aside. In a medium-sized bowl, combine sour cream and cottage cheese; set aside. Place half the crushed chips in the bottom of a 2½-quart casserole dish that has been coated with a nonstick vegetable spray. Add enough meat mixture to cover the chips, then cover the meat with half the sour cream mixture. Sprinkle with half the grated cheese. Repeat layers. Bake, uncovered, for 30 to 35 minutes, until cheese melts and casserole is heated through.

NOTE: This is just as good made with ground turkey as it is with beef.

"Mixed-Up" Garlic-Braised Lamb Shanks

8 to 12 servings

Let's look at an "old" that has a lot of "new" about it–lamb shanks. And the reason we say they're "mixed up" is 'cause nobody knows if the recipe was originally Armenian, Italian, or Greek. The shanks taste so good you'll see why everybody wants the credit!

- 12 lamb shanks
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon dried rosemary
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 4 to 6 garlic cloves, minced, or ½ teaspoon granulated garlic
- 3 cups chicken or beef broth or stock (or water, if desired)
- 1 cup finely chopped onions (optional)

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a shallow bowl, combine flour, thyme, paprika, salt, and rosemary. Dredge lamb shanks in seasoned flour. In a large skillet, heat oil; brown shanks. Place lamb shanks in a baking pan (or pans) in a single layer; sprinkle the remaining flour mixture and garlic on the shanks, add broth and onions, and braise for 1½ hours. Remove from oven and cool; skim off the fat that has risen to the top. Cook for 2 hours more or until tender; serve.

NOTE: If you'd like leaner shanks, after cooking, cool the shanks slightly, refrigerate them, and the next day, remove the solidified fat. Reheat the shanks for an hour, then serve.

Mexican Meat Loaf

4 servings

More Mexican?! You bet!! It's the new popular with the taste of the old country.

- 1½ pounds ground beef
- 1 medium-sized onion, chopped
- ½ cup chopped mushrooms
- ¼ cup chopped green bell pepper
- ½ cup taco sauce
- 2 tablespoons barbecue sauce
- 1 egg, beaten
- ½ cup finely crushed tortilla chips
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Dash black pepper

Preheat oven to 400°F. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients; mix well. Pack meat mixture into a greased 8"x4" loaf pan. Bake for 1¼ hours or until done.

NOTE: You can use ground veal, pork, or turkey, if you prefer. You can also use ketchup instead of barbecue sauce and, for a change, you can melt some Cheddar cheese on top of the meat loaf during the last 10 minutes of baking.

Country-Fried Steak

about 3 servings

Remember the food of the '50s–the diner food, the country food, the real stick-to-your-ribs stuff? This one will bring you back, but without all the fussing!

- 1½ pounds cubed steak
- ½ cup Italian salad dressing
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- Salt to taste
- Pepper to taste

Cut cubed steak into individual-sized portions and place in a large bowl. Pour the Italian dressing over the steak pieces and toss well. Place the flour in a plastic bag or dish; add steak pieces and coat well. In a heavy skillet, heat the oil; fry the steak pieces in oil, turning to brown both sides. Then fry the steak for approximately 2 minutes more per side or until a golden brown crust has formed. Before serving, add salt and pepper to taste.

NOTE: Serve over mashed potatoes, if you like. You can also try this recipe with hamburger, or chicken, turkey, or veal cutlets, instead of steak. Instead of Italian dressing you can try your favorite salad dressing–creamy, plain, or light–and any other seasonings that will give it your own special touch.

Dijon Honey Chops

4 servings

These are as fine, fancy-tasting, and mouth-watering as any pork chops I've ever had. And we can end up looking that fine and fancy in just minutes–WOW!! This one will become one of your standards that they'll always be looking for. It's probably my favorite "new way" with "old-way" pork chops.

- 1¼ to 1½ pounds pork loin chops, ¾ inch thick
- Seasoned salt for sprinkling
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- ⅓ cup orange juice
- 1½ tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch

Sprinkle both sides of chops liberally with seasoned salt. In a large skillet, heat oil; brown chops, about 2 minutes per side. In a bowl, combine remaining ingredients; pour mixture over chops. Cover skillet, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes or until done.

Jamaican Steak

6 servings

One of the popular tastes to hit the country lately is Caribbean. It sounds so exotic and difficult but it's not–it's just delicious! So why not take your family on a Jamaican holiday without leaving home. Ready?

- ⅓ cup lime juice (fresh is best, about 3 limes)
- 1 teaspoon grated lime peel
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- ¼ cup honey
- 2 tablespoons prepared mustard
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 pounds top round, sirloin, or flank steak
- Lime wedges for garnish

In a small bowl, whisk together all ingredients, except steak and lime wedges. Score steak across top or pierce several times with a fork. Place steak in a shallow glass baking dish and pour lime juice mixture over the steak; turn to coat both sides. Refrigerate for 6 to 8 hours to "marry" the flavors, turning occasionally. Remove the steak from the marinade and grill for 5 to 6 minutes on each side (or broil in the oven for 3 minutes on each side), or to desired doneness. Slice thinly on the diagonal and serve with the lime wedges.

NOTE: It's fine to use bottled garlic instead of fresh.

Pepper Steak Stir-Fry

about 6 servings

It's the easiest, fastest, and soon-to-be everybody's favorite 'cause it combines fast Chinese wok cooking with a smack of popular Mexican. My gosh!! Can't do anything but win raves. And when so much of your seasoning comes from a jar, it sure makes it a lot easier.

- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 2 pounds boneless steak, sliced into thin strips
- 1 large onion, cut into ¾-inch angled slices
- 3 green bell peppers, cut into strips
- ½ pound mushrooms, sliced
- 1½ cups mild picante sauce
- 1 cup water
- ⅓ cup soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder

In a large skillet or wok, heat the oil over high heat until moderately hot; sauté steak and onion for about 5 minutes, stirring often. Add peppers and mushrooms and cook for about 5 minutes more, stirring often, until vegetables are tender. In a bowl, combine picante sauce, water, soy sauce, cornstarch, and garlic powder; add to steak and vegetable mixture. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes more or until the sauce thickens, stirring occasionally.

NOTE: Serve over rice or fried noodles. For an Oriental twist, try using ginger or five-spice powder; for Mexican, try a touch of chili powder or cumin; for Mediterranean, add a little oregano. You can also use different veggies for variety. And here's a hint to make the meat easier to slice: place it in the freezer until firm.

One-Pot Short Ribs

about 4 servings

Nothing's more welcome or down-home any time of the year than an old-fashioned thick-with-barley-and-potatoes short ribs dinner. Remember that? Every Eastern European–influenced home had its own special touch. Ours was to use a bottled teriyaki sauce instead of Worcestershire. (We originally tried it that way because we'd run out of Worcestershire sauce!) And wait'll you see how easy it is!

- 3 pounds beef short ribs
- 1 medium-sized onion, chopped (about 1 cup)
- 3 cups water
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 2 teaspoons salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 3 tablespoons teriyaki sauce
- 2 large potatoes, peeled and cut into ½-inch slices
- ½ cup barley

In a large pot, combine the short ribs, onion, water, paprika, salt, pepper, and teriyaki sauce; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low; cover and cook for about 1½ hours, stirring occasionally. Add the potatoes and barley; cook for an additional hour, stirring occasionally and adding more water, if necessary.

NOTE: This is one of those better-when-reheated-the-next-day recipes. Yup! And reheating in the microwave is fine.

Not-Your-Regular Brisket

about 6 servings

We're usually looking for another way to roast a brisket of beef. Well, here's something a little different for a change. Even with the soy sauce to fool everybody, this is a true "touch of sweet" German and Dutch holiday-style treat.

- 3½ to 4 pounds beef brisket, trimmed
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- 1 green bell pepper, sliced
- ½ cup raisins
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 can (20 ounces) unsweetened apple slices, drained

Place brisket in a large pot or baking pan. Add water, soy sauce, and pepper; cover and simmer for 2½ to 3 hours. Add onion, green pepper, raisins, brown sugar, and apple slices; simmer for 30 to 40 minutes more. Remove brisket and slice. Serve, covered with pan juices.

NOTE: You can substitute a couple of sliced fresh apples for the canned. You can also add a touch of hot pepper sauce or garlic to "heat up" the recipe.

Barbecued Steak Strips

3 to 4 servings

When you miss that BBQ flavor because of the weather (or the seasons), just try this sure-fire recipe indoors. It's a winner, even without the grill!

- 1 pound round or shoulder steak
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- ½ cup ketchup
- 1 teaspoon prepared mustard
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon instant minced onion
- ½ cup dry red wine

Trim fat from steak and freeze slightly for easier slicing; cut steak into thin strips. In a large skillet, heat the oil; brown steak strips on both sides. Add remaining ingredients; cover and cook slowly for about 1 hour or until tender, adding a little more wine as the liquid cooks out. When the sauce is fairly thick, steak should be tender.

NOTE: Serve on rolls or over rice or noodles. To "heat up" the recipe a bit, you can add cumin, Creole seasoning, or garlic powder.

Mexican Pot Roast

8 servings

A simple pot roast Mexican style that'll have the gang glad for that little change from the regular ho-hum!

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 pounds lean boneless chuck pot roast
- 1 can (14½ ounces) whole tomatoes
- 1 can (3 ounces) chopped green chilies
- 1 envelope (1.25 ounces) taco seasoning mix
- 1 tablespoon beef or chicken dry bouillon granules
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Onion or garlic powder (optional)

In a Dutch oven (or similar type pot), heat olive oil; brown the pot roast on all sides. In a bowl, combine remaining ingredients; pour over pot roast. Cover and simmer over low heat for 3½ to 4 hours or until pot roast is tender. Slice and serve.

NOTE: Serve with noodles or rice.

Grilled Honey-Garlic Pork Chops

5 to 12 servings

Want something a little different to do with pork chops? Well, here's the ticket 'cause the Pennsylvania Dutch sweet and sour touch is the star of the table. You'll see!!

MARINADE

- ¾ cup lemon juice
- ¾ cup honey
- 6 tablespoons soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons dry sherry or any dry white wine
- 6 garlic cloves, chopped

- 10 to 12 pork chops, cut 1½ inches thick

Combine marinade ingredients in a baking dish. Add chops to marinade. Cover and refrigerate overnight, turning once to "marry" the flavors. Remove chops from marinade and grill for about 10 minutes per side or until done. Discard excess marinade.

NOTE: I prefer to use center cut loin chops for a special meal, but rib chops will work just as well, too.

Exotic Lamb-Stuffed Potatoes

6 to 8 servings

I've often said that the spice rack can be an easy world journey. If you want proof, try this little trip we can take to the Middle East!

- 6 to 8 potatoes, baked
- 1¼ pounds ground lamb
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 can (28 ounces) whole tomatoes, undrained
- ¼ cup chopped green bell pepper
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- Salt to taste
- Black or cayenne pepper to taste

Slice off tops of baked potatoes; scoop out insides and reserve for other uses. In a large skillet, sauté lamb and onion over medium heat until slightly browned. Add tomatoes, green pepper, parsley, allspice, nutmeg, salt, and pepper and cook for 5 to 6 minutes. Preheat oven to 300°F. Place potato shells in a baking pan; spoon meat-tomato mixture into potato shells and heat for about 10 minutes or until heated through. Serve.

NOTE: Ground beef and ground turkey work just as well. I save the insides of the potatoes for potato soup, mashed potatoes, or other potato dishes.

Texas-Style Pot Roast

6 to 8 servings

How about something hearty, and rich and tangy, too? It's a super way to have a hale and hearty meal anytime! This is probably one of the simplest pot roasts ever. But the taste! Oh, the taste!!

- 1 4- to 5-pound single-cut beef brisket, well trimmed
- 4 cups barbecue sauce
- 2 large onions, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon chopped garlic

Preheat oven to 350°F. Place the brisket in a large roasting pan and set aside. In a large saucepan, combine remaining ingredients to make sauce; heat through. Pour 2 cups of the heated sauce over the brisket. Refrigerate remaining sauce for later use. Cook the brisket for 3 to 3½ hours or until tender; cover halfway through that time. Leave in pan and cool brisket in refrigerator; remove all the fat that rises and solidifies on the top. Combine the juices from the roasting pan with the cooled reserved sauce; warm through. Rewarm brisket, slice thinly, and serve topped with warm sauce.

NOTE: Enjoy sliced brisket on rolls, topped with sauce.

Oriental Pork Burgers

4 burgers

Amazing!!! This is one of the best ground pork recipes I've ever made. The Chinese touches make it so flavorful.

- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 large onion, sliced
- ¾ cup water, divided
- 4 teaspoons cornstarch

In a large bowl, combine the soy sauce, wine vinegar, brown sugar, ginger, and garlic. Combine 3 tablespoons of the soy sauce mixture with the pork, reserving the remaining liquid. Form pork into patties and grill until done, about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, pour reserved soy sauce mixture into a saucepan; add onion and cook until it is tender and brown. Add ¼ cup of the water. In a small bowl, mix cornstarch with remaining ½ cup water; pour into saucepan to thicken mixture. Pour soy sauce mixture over cooked burgers and serve.

Salisbury Steak

12 patties

It seems everybody's rediscovering Salisbury Steak these days. There are thousands of ways to prepare it. Basically, it's a hamburger with an onion-flavored gravy, the way Mama used to make it. And is it ever still delicious! (I think they called it "steak" so we'd think we were getting something different from our regular hamburger.)

- 1½ pounds ground beef
- 1½ cups dry bread crumbs
- 2 eggs
- 1½ cups canned carrots, drained and chopped (1 16-ounce can contains about 2 cups)
- 1 small onion, chopped
- ¼ cup milk
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 can (10¾ ounces) cream of mushroom soup
- All-purpose flour for coating
- Vegetable oil for browning

GRAVY

- 1 can (4 ounces) mushroom pieces
- 1 can (10¾ ounces) cream of mushroom soup
- 10¾ ounces milk (1 soup can)

In a large bowl, mix the ground beef, bread crumbs, eggs, carrots, onion, milk, salt, pepper, and one can mushroom soup; form mixture into patties. Place flour in a shallow dish; dust patties with flour. In 2 large skillets, heat oil; brown patties on both sides. Drain off excess fat. Sprinkle mushroom pieces over patties. In a medium-sized bowl, combine the remaining 1 can mushroom soup and milk; pour soup-milk mixture evenly over patties. Cook slowly in covered skillets for 25 minutes.

NOTE: Salisbury Steak sure is easy with canned carrots, but fresh carrots work well, too. If you'd like, you can add a little garlic, sage, caraway, or dill to perk up the flavor. For a different taste treat, you can use ground sausage; for a light change you can use ground turkey. You can use a soup mix if you don't have canned cream of mushroom soup; it'll work well, too. You see, anything goes!

Easy Spring Lamb

4 to 6 servings

Here's an old-time tradition that's a lot easier than it used to be because of American spring lambs, which are younger and always mild and tender.

- 1 3-pound boneless leg of lamb
- 1 cup dry red wine
- ¼ cup Italian salad dressing
- 2 teaspoons dried rosemary leaves
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

In a large baking dish, mix together all ingredients, except lamb. Place lamb in baking dish and marinate in refrigerator for 2 to 3 hours, turning occasionally. Preheat oven to 350°F. Remove marinade from baking dish; discard marinade. Roast lamb, uncovered, for 1½ to 2 hours or until done.

Peppered Lamb Shanks

6 servings

Here's a main course that fits today's desire for economical and easy with an old-time taste that keeps the economical part a secret–they'll never know!

- 6 lamb shanks
- Salt to taste
- Black pepper to taste
- ¾ cup chicken or beef broth
- 1 yellow bell pepper, sliced
- 1 red bell pepper, sliced
- 1 green bell pepper, sliced
- 1 bunch scallions, sliced
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons water

Preheat oven to 350°F. Sprinkle lamb shanks with salt and pepper; place in a large baking dish. Bake for 2 to 2½ hours, until meat is tender; drain. In a large skillet, combine the broth, peppers, scallions, wine, and garlic; cook just until peppers are tender. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, mix cornstarch and water together. Add cornstarch mixture to the skillet and cook until liquid thickens. Pour pepper mixture over shanks in baking dish and bake for 10 minutes more to heat through.

Chuck Wagon Buns

4 servings

Food tastes special when we're camping out under the stars. But even if we're staying home, we can still capture some of that wonderful open-air flavor right from our kitchen stove–uh, sorry–I mean from the chuck wagon!

- 1 pound ground beef
- ⅔ cup ketchup
- 1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ cup hickory-flavored bottled barbecue sauce
- 4 hot dog rolls
- Butter or margarine for rolls (optional)

In a large skillet, brown the beef; drain off liquid. Stir in ketchup, brown sugar, chili powder, cumin, pepper, and barbecue sauce; simmer for 10 minutes to blend all the flavors. Meanwhile, butter the rolls and toast them under the broiler. Spoon the beef mixture onto the toasted hot dog rolls.

NOTE: Serve with baked beans, pasta salad, or crunchy raw vegetables to complete the meal.

Veal Marsala

3 to 4 servings

This proves we can cook very "hoo hoo" fancy-sounding dishes simply. And with only 6 ingredients, it's done in minutes. And yes, we still have loads of room for our own special touches.

All-purpose flour for coating
¼ teaspoon salt
⅛ teaspoon pepper
1½ pounds veal cutlets, sliced and flattened to ½-inch thickness
8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter or margarine
1 cup Marsala or other red wine

In a shallow dish, mix together the flour, salt, and pepper; coat the veal slices well with the mixture. In a large skillet, sauté the veal slices in the butter over medium-high heat until lightly golden, without stacking or overlapping them. Pour wine into skillet and cook veal for another 2 minutes to warm everything through. Serve immediately.

NOTE: This is just as easy and good made with turkey cutlets or skinless and boneless chicken breasts.

Honey Apple Chops

4 servings

This is the perfect marinade for pork chops on the grill. It tastes like we have a better-than-anybody's secret. Too good to be simple! Hah! Hah! You'll see!

1½ cups apple cider or juice
¼ cup lemon juice
¼ cup soy sauce
2 tablespoons honey
1 garlic clove, minced
¼ teaspoon pepper
4 boneless pork loin chops, 1 inch thick

In a bowl, combine all ingredients, except chops; mix well to make a marinade. Place chops in a shallow dish; pour marinade over chops, cover, and refrigerate, turning occasionally, for 4 to 24 hours. Heat grill and grill chops for 10 to 12 minutes, turning once and basting occasionally with marinade. Discard remaining marinade.

Fajitas

4 servings

It's so easy to make these your own "secret recipe"—you may want to change the marinade flavorings or the veggie combinations or even add your own toppings. Whatever you do, you can't go wrong with these fun and trendy all-in-one pockets.

- 1 skirt or flank steak (about 1 to 1½ pounds)
- ¼ cup lime juice
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 4 flour tortillas (10-inch size), warmed
- 1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 cup shredded lettuce
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1 small green bell pepper, cut into thin strips
- 2 scallions, sliced
- 2 avocados, seeded, peeled, and sliced
- Sour cream for topping (optional)
- Bottled salsa for topping (optional)

Partially freeze the steak for easier slicing. Slice steak across the grain into ½-inch strips. In a large bowl, mix the lime juice, olive oil, and garlic. Add meat; cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, turning occasionally (overnight is best). In a large skillet, heat the vegetable oil; fry meat quickly over medium-high heat until browned. Remove from heat. Fill each tortilla with about ¾ cup meat. Divide cheese, lettuce, tomato, green pepper, scallions, and avocado slices among the tortillas. Serve with sour cream and salsa, if desired.

Vegetable Beef Chili

6 servings

You talk about a whole meal?! How about having your meat and veggies all in one, and all in one pot! Now that's easy!

- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 pounds ground beef
- 3 fresh tomatoes, chopped
- 3 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste
- 1 can (15 ounces) red kidney beans (optional)
- 1 cup (4 ounces) grated Cheddar cheese (optional)

In a large pot, heat the oil; sauté the onion, green pepper, celery, and garlic just until tender. Add beef and brown; drain liquid. Add tomatoes, chili powder, salt, oregano, and red pepper; mix. Cover and simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. If desired, add kidney beans during the last 5 minutes of cooking. Serve topped with grated Cheddar cheese, if desired.

Summer Grilled Steak

4 to 6 servings

Here's a quick marinade that's great for when we're short of time or just want a full-flavored steak to light up their eyes. That old-time taste of Mama's long-cooked steak is as close as our barbecue grill.

- ½ cup tomato sauce
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 pounds sirloin steak, about ½-inch thick

Preheat the barbecue grill or the oven to broil. In a small bowl, combine all ingredients, except steak; stir well to blend. Prick both sides of the steak with a fork, then place in a shallow baking dish. Brush tomato sauce mixture generously over both sides of steak. Grill or broil for 8 to 10 minutes, then turn, brush on remaining sauce, and cook for 8 to 10 minutes more, to desired doneness. Serve immediately.

NOTE: Serve it your favorite way—sliced, rolled, sandwiched, or pocketed. You can also try porterhouse, rib steak, or top round. For an added zip, try some hot pepper sauce.

Fish and Seafood

Fish sure is popular these days! It *should* be! With all of us being more aware and watching our cholesterol intake, it makes sense!

We're eating lots more fish than ever in restaurants, yet only slightly more at home. I guess many people still think it takes lots of handling and that it smells up our kitchens too much. Well, not true anymore because our fish gets to us fresher than ever. (And when it's frozen at sea, just hours out of the water, it's even fresher than "fresh fish.")

Our selections of mild-flavored fish could even be called "fast food" because they're cooked in minutes. None of that baking for hours 'til it's dry and falls apart, like Mama did it. Nope! Cook it no more than 10 minutes per inch at its thickest part and it'll be moist, tender, and flavorful every time.

And, speaking of flavor, most mild-fleshed fish gets its flavor from our seasonings, so do your own thing. Start with my suggestions, add more or less of those, or add your favorites totally. It'll still be fast and simple . . . and fun getting all that applause!

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Parmesan Baked Fish

3 to 4 servings

Fish is a fast food! It takes only minutes no matter how it's cooked–broiled, baked, fried, whatever. This one's a winner for adding a fine, elegant taste without any extra work.

- 1 pound fish fillets
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried dillweed
- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter or margarine, melted
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 450°F. In a shallow bowl, combine the flour, onion powder, salt, pepper, and dillweed; dredge fish fillets in mixture. Coat a shallow baking dish with nonstick vegetable spray; place fish in baking dish. Drizzle melted butter over fish, then sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake for 7 to 10 minutes (depending upon the thickness of the fish) or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.

NOTE: Serve with lemon, lime, orange, or grapefruit slices. Instead of flour, try crushed crackers and add fresh ground herbs, if you have some on hand. Haddock, cod, or sole fillets work well.

Very Fancy Fish

4 to 6 servings
(2 cups sauce)

Here's a fast, easy way to prepare fish for company. It'll look and taste like the Ritz!

4 to 6 medium-sized fish fillets (sole, haddock, or cod)

SAUCE

1 cup mild barbecue sauce
1 cup canned crushed tomatoes
⅓ cup finely minced onion
1 teaspoon hot pepper sauce
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon garlic powder
½ teaspoon dried oregano
½ teaspoon dried thyme
2 tablespoons dry red wine

Fry, broil, or bake fish fillets until done; set aside. Place all sauce ingredients in a saucepan and mix well; bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat and simmer for 2 to 3 minutes more to blend the flavors. Place sauce on a platter and arrange cooked fish on top of it. Serve warm.

Buttermilk Fried Fish

4 to 6 servings

"The batter won't stick!" I hear that all the time. Well, here's a little trick that will hold the batter on and mellow the fish—all at the same time!

2 pounds white-fleshed fish fillets
1 cup buttermilk
1 cup biscuit baking mix
1 teaspoon salt
Vegetable oil for frying (¼ inch deep in large skillet)

Thaw the fish if frozen. Cut fish into serving-sized portions and place in a shallow dish. Pour buttermilk over fish, cover, and refrigerate for 30 minutes, turning once. In a large bowl, combine biscuit mix and salt; remove fish from buttermilk and coat with biscuit mix mixture. In a large skillet, heat oil; place fish in skillet in single layer and cook until it is browned on both sides and flakes easily with a fork. Drain fish on paper towels and serve.

NOTE: Cod, perch, and haddock work especially well.

Chinese Ginger Fish Fillets

4 servings

Know what makes the fish in the Chinese restaurant seem so exotic? It's the ginger! It's so simple that we can enjoy that style fish at home (for a lot less money, too).

BATTER

- 4 eggs, beaten
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger

SAUCE

- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 1 green bell pepper, cut into ¼-inch slices
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into ¼-inch slices

- 2 pounds white-fleshed fish fillets
- Cornstarch for dipping
- 2 tablespoons peanut oil

In a small bowl, combine batter ingredients; set aside. Dip fillets in cornstarch and then in batter. Reserve remaining batter. In a large nonstick skillet, heat peanut oil; sauté fillets until golden. Remove fillets from skillet and set aside. Add sauce ingredients and reserved batter to same skillet, quick-stirring for 1 minute; serve over fillets.

NOTE: Flounder, cod, and grouper work especially well.

Scalloped Seafood Casserole

6 appetizer or 2 to 3 main-dish servings

Here's a great way to make imitation crabmeat taste very rich! As a main course, surrounded by veggies, it's the way our Mamas would have served it to solve our Sunday night "What-do-I-feel-like?" dilemma.

- 5 tablespoons butter, divided
- 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups milk
- ½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- Dash of pepper
- Dash of paprika
- 2 tablespoons sherry
- 2 cups imitation crabmeat pieces (about 1 pound)
- ¼ cup dry bread crumbs

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large skillet, melt 4 tablespoons butter over medium heat; add flour and stir until smooth paste forms. Add milk; cook for a few minutes until thickened, stirring constantly. Mix in the Worcestershire sauce, parsley, pepper, paprika, and sherry. Place mixture in a well-greased 2-quart casserole. Cover with imitation crabmeat pieces. Make soft buttered bread crumbs by melting the remaining 1 tablespoon butter and mixing with the bread crumbs. Sprinkle over crabmeat pieces. Bake for 20 minutes, until lightly golden.

NOTE: Shrimp and real crabmeat work well, too. Serve over toast points.

Fish French Style

4 servings

Here's a great old way with fish that has it tasting as if it was prepared in a gourmet restaurant. Don't worry! It's really easy!

- 2 medium-sized onions, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 4 apples, peeled, cored, and sliced
- 2 cups apple cider or apple juice
- 2 teaspoons cider vinegar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 6 white-fleshed fish fillets (about 2 pounds)

Preheat oven to 400°F. In a large skillet, sauté onions in butter just until soft. Add apples, apple cider, vinegar, salt, and pepper; cook until warmed through, about another 1 to 2 minutes. In a 9″ × 13″ baking dish, arrange fillets in a single layer; pour apple mixture over fillets. Cover baking dish with foil and bake for 12 to 15 minutes (depending on the thickness of the fillets) or until fish flakes easily with a fork.

NOTE: Serve with rice or pasta. Garnish with parsley, if desired.

Scalloped Salmon and Corn

6 to 8 servings

Looking for something a little bit different to serve for lunch, brunch, or a light dinner? This'll make them sit up and take notice! Mama could do a million things with a can of salmon; this one proves it 'cause it's one of her best.

- 1 can (6½ ounces) pink salmon, drained and flaked (reserve liquid in measuring cup)
- Milk (enough to make 1 cup when added to salmon liquid)
- 3 tablespoons margarine, divided
- ½ cup chopped onion
- ¼ cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1¼ cups crushed saltine crackers, divided
- 1 can (16 ounces) cream-style corn
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 cup (4 ounces) shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

Preheat oven to 350°F. Add milk to reserved salmon liquid to make 1 cup. In a skillet, melt 2 tablespoons margarine; sauté onion and green pepper until tender. Stir in salmon, milk mixture, 1 cup cracker crumbs, corn, eggs, Cheddar cheese, salt, and pepper; turn into an 8-inch square baking pan coated with nonstick vegetable spray. Melt remaining 1 tablespoon margarine; toss remaining ¼ cup cracker crumbs with melted margarine and sprinkle mixture over casserole. Bake for about 45 minutes or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean.

NOTE: Sprinkle with parsley, if desired, and serve on white bread toast.

Fish Cakes

about 6 patties

How about a new way to make an old recipe even better than it was way back when? Remember fish cakes? We can make them easily, and if we have leftover fish from last night's supper–Wow!–it's perfect for this.

About ¾ pound cooked white-fleshed fish fillets (cod or sole)
2 cups mashed potatoes
1 small onion, finely chopped
1½ teaspoons salt
½ teaspoon pepper
1 to 2 eggs, well beaten
Cornflake crumbs for dredging

Preheat oven to 400°F. In a large bowl, break fish apart and mash. Mix in the potatoes and onion. Form mixture into patties; dip patties in the egg, then the cornflake crumbs. Place coated patties in a baking dish that has been coated with nonstick vegetable spray and bake for about 10 minutes.

NOTE: Adding a little chopped fresh dill or parsley gives these a nice touch. And you can even use instant mashed potatoes here . . . that makes it even easier.

Cheesy Baked Fish

6 servings

We're always looking for a new way to jazz up fish. Well, this little twist will make the family anxious to get to the table!

6 catfish fillets, fresh or frozen
1 cup finely crushed cheese crackers
¼ cup sesame seed
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
½ cup (1 stick) butter or margarine, melted
Grated Parmesan cheese (optional)

Thaw fish fillets if frozen. Preheat oven to 400°F. In a shallow bowl, combine cracker crumbs, sesame seed, parsley, salt, and black and cayenne peppers. Dip fish fillets in melted butter, then roll fillets in cracker-crumb mixture. Place fillets in a single layer in a baking dish that has been coated with nonstick vegetable spray and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until golden. Serve topped with Parmesan cheese, if desired.

Key West Fillets

about 4 servings

Here's something that'll perk up their tastebuds and have them clamoring for more, because this is how tastily they enjoy it in the Keys!

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter or margarine
- ⅔ cup crushed saltine crackers
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 pound fish fillets
- Juice of ½ lime

Preheat oven to 350°F. Melt butter in a 9" × 13" baking pan in the oven. Meanwhile, in a shallow dish, combine cracker crumbs, Parmesan cheese, Italian seasoning, salt, and garlic powder. Dip fillets in melted butter, then in cracker-crumb mixture. Arrange fish in a single layer in the baking pan, sprinkle with lime juice, and bake for about 20 minutes, until fish is tender and flakes easily with a fork.

NOTE: In Key West, the fish fillets would naturally be grouper, but any fish fillets will work—white or pink or dark. Try sole, flounder, or whatever you like best. Do your own thing 'cause whatever's on sale will work fine.

Grilled Fish

3 to 4 servings

If you've been looking for easy fish—this is it! Try it on the barbecue. (And hinged grill baskets make it even easier!)

- 1½ pounds white-fleshed fish fillets (cod, haddock, or sole)
- ½ cup Italian salad dressing

In a large bowl, marinate fillets in salad dressing in refrigerator for 20 to 30 minutes. Preheat barbecue grill. Place marinated fillets in a hinged grill basket that's been coated with nonstick vegetable spray. Grill for about 10 minutes per inch-thickness of fish or until fish flakes easily with a fork.

NOTE: Before grilling, try sprinkling fish with Parmesan cheese. I prefer Italian dressing for the marinade, but just about any dressing will work. And it can have campfire taste even without any seasonings—mesquite and hickory-flavored charcoals, wood chips, and lava rocks have built-in flavor . . . with no mess! If you'd like to make this indoors, preheat your broiler and brush the broiler pan or baking dish with oil. Place the fish about 4 inches from the broiler unit and broil for about 10 minutes per inch-thickness of fish.

Stuffed Sole Fillets

8 servings

This is a nice change from the regular bread-type stuffings because the potatoes are so light. Nice for company, too; the fish looks so fancy all rolled up.

About 2½ cups mashed potatoes
1 teaspoon dried dillweed
½ teaspoon salt
8 sole fillets (3 to 4 ounces each)
⅓ cup butter, melted
Chopped fresh parsley for garnish

Preheat oven to 375°F. In a large bowl, thoroughly blend the potatoes with the dillweed and salt. Spread about ¼ cup potato mixture on each fillet. Roll fillets and place, seam-side down, in a 7" × 11" baking pan that has been coated with nonstick vegetable spray. Brush melted butter over fillet rolls and bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until fish flakes easily with a fork. Sprinkle with chopped parsley.

NOTE: You can substitute instant mashed potatoes for fresh. I often like to add ½ teaspoon each of garlic powder and thyme in place of the salt.

Potatoes and Rice

Potatoes and rice are easy and always available. That must be why they're food staples throughout the world. They can be used as thickeners, side dishes, desserts . . . and on and on.

My Mama had eight or ten ways to make them. She didn't have time to be much more creative, so we enjoyed those same ones over and over. Well, it seems that it was the same in every family, so that gave me lots of choices for special potato and rice dishes! A few of the MR. FOOD® TV show favorites are here. They were somebody's family favorites. So, enjoy . . . and feel at home.

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Easy French-Fancy Rice

4 to 6 servings

Making holiday-special meals means exotic, intricate recipes–right? Not with this one. It's so easy . . . serve it anytime, and it'll make any meal holiday-special and gourmet-tasting special. (Thanks, Pat.)

- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter or margarine
- 2 cups cooked rice
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 375°F. In a large skillet, sauté the onion in the butter until golden. In a large bowl, mix the sautéed onion with the remaining ingredients. Pour the mixture into a greased 1½-quart baking dish and bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until lightly golden and heated through.

NOTE: Garnish with chopped parsley and paprika.

Mama's Harvest Pudding

4 to 6 servings

Mama's cooking–you can almost taste it just thinking about it! What she could do with harvest items was mouth-watering. Well, we can have that same yesterday-taste but with today-easy. Wouldn't Mama be proud of us!

- 1 cup peeled and grated sweet potato (about 1 medium or ½ pound)
- 1 cup peeled and grated carrot (about 3 carrots)
- 1 cup peeled, cored, and grated apple (about 1 large apple)
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup cracker crumbs or cracker meal
- ½ cup chopped prunes
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter or margarine, melted

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients; mix well. Pour mixture into a greased 8" × 4" loaf pan and bake for 45 minutes or until heated through. Serve warm as a side dish.

NOTE: A food processor makes grating a snap. Your loaf pan doesn't have to be the same size I use. Any one close to that size will do.

Three-Cheese Potatoes

6 servings

Everybody loves potatoes, but sometimes we'd like to have them a little different. Here's a way to prepare them that can turn a simple meal into a feast!

- 6 medium-sized potatoes, peeled
- 1½ cups cottage cheese, dry curd or pot style (1 16-ounce container is about 1⅔ cups)
- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons chopped scallions
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 2 teaspoons dried dillweed
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ½ cup (2 ounces) shredded Cheddar cheese
- ½ cup (2 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack cheese

Place the potatoes in a large pot, add enough salted water to cover, and bring to a boil; cook until just done, about 15 to 20 minutes. Preheat oven to 350°F. Drain potatoes, cool slightly, then cut into ¼-inch slices; place slices in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, combine cottage cheese, sour cream, scallions, parsley, dillweed, and salt; add to potatoes and mix gently. Spoon mixture into a lightly greased 1½-quart casserole dish; sprinkle Cheddar and Monterey Jack cheeses over the top. Bake for about 30 minutes or until light golden and bubbly.

NOTE: If dry curd or pot style cottage cheese is not available, use small curd cottage cheese but strain it first. You can make this dish lighter by using low-fat cheeses and sour cream, and you can cut down on the salt, if you prefer.

Potato Magics

24 large or 72 small puffs

We all love those old-fashioned tastes, but the old-fashioned hard work? No, thanks! Here's a shortcut way to have a taste of the good old days—you know, when they called these dumplings or knishes or baked pirogi or just potato puffs. This quick way they form their own crust. It's a super appetizer when made in a smaller size, too.

- 3 pounds potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup cracker or bread crumbs
- 2 teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 eggs yolks, beaten

Place the potatoes in a large pot, add enough salted water to cover, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer over medium heat for 25 to 30 minutes, or until potatoes are tender. Drain water; mash potatoes and allow to cool. Preheat oven to 400°F. In a skillet, heat the olive oil; sauté onion until tender. Add onion, cracker crumbs, salt, and pepper to potatoes; remash them. Coat cookie sheets with nonstick vegetable spray. Roll potato mixture into balls with your hands and place the balls on the cookie sheets; brush them with egg yolk. Bake for about 45 minutes, until crusty golden brown.

NOTE: Serve as an hors d'oeuvre, side dish, or snack, or even for brunch.

Spanish Rice

6 servings

Here's an all-time favorite that can be a side dish or a whole meal. It's quick and easy and made all in one pan. OLÉ!

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1 cup uncooked rice
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1½ cups water
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
- 1 can (14½ ounces) whole tomatoes, drained and chopped

In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the beef, onion, and green pepper, cooking until the meat is browned; drain liquid. Stir in remaining ingredients; reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes or until rice is tender.

NOTE: For a lighter touch, you can substitute ground turkey or veal for the beef.

Lemon Rice

4 to 6 servings

How about a light and easy side dish to accompany tonight's supper? It's the perfect "go-along" for everything from chicken to ribs.

- 1 cup uncooked white rice
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

In a large saucepan, combine all ingredients, except parsley; bring mixture to a boil, stirring once or twice. Lower heat, cover tightly, and simmer for 15 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. (Cook brown rice for about 45 minutes; parboiled rice for about 20 minutes.) Stir in parsley and serve.

NOTE: Serve with your favorite meat, chicken, or fish. For flavor variations, try adding a spice, some chopped green bell pepper, or a few chopped walnuts. Whatever touches you give it will work to make it "your very own."

Mashed Potato Pancakes

about 24 small pancakes

How about a quick and easy way to bring a smile to your face and theirs? Did I say easy? I meant extra-easy!! These aren't exactly like the original grated raw potato pancakes, but we don't get grated knuckles, either.

- 4 cups water
- 1 stick (½ cup) butter or margarine
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 4 cups instant potato flakes
- 1¼ cups milk
- 1 large onion, diced
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 3 eggs, beaten
- Vegetable oil for frying (½ inch deep in large skillet)

In a large saucepan, combine water, butter, and salt; bring to a boil. Remove from heat, add potato flakes, and mix. Add milk, then mix again until smooth; let cool. Add onion, parsley, flour, and eggs; mix. In a large skillet, heat oil; using about ¼ cup of mixture per pancake, form pancakes and fry in skillet for 2 minutes on each side, until golden. Drain pancakes on paper towels.

NOTE: Serve with applesauce, sour cream, ketchup, or syrup—whatever's your favorite.

Quick Italian Rice

6 servings

In the mood for a traditional Italian dish that cooks up creamy rich, but without all the work? Try this! We might have heard this referred to as risotto . . . whatever it's called, it's still easy.

- 1 cup medium-grain uncooked rice
- 2 cups chicken broth, divided
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- ½ cup thinly sliced carrots
- ½ cup thinly sliced zucchini
- ½ cup thinly sliced yellow squash
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper

In a large saucepan, combine the rice and 1½ cups of the chicken broth; bring to a boil, stirring occasionally, then lower heat to simmer. Cover and cook for about 15 minutes; set aside. In a large skillet, cook carrots, zucchini, and yellow squash in butter just until softened, about 2 to 3 minutes. Add wine and cook for 2 minutes more; set aside and keep warm. Add remaining ½ cup broth to hot rice over medium-high heat, stirring until broth is absorbed. Stir in cooked vegetables, cheese, and pepper. Serve immediately.

French Roasted Potatoes

12 servings

Turn any meal into a feast by making the potatoes special. Sounds difficult, doesn't it? Well, it's not. But it is that special!!

- 24 small red-skinned potatoes, quartered
- 4 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
- ⅔ cup Dijon mustard
- 1 stick (½ cup) butter or margarine, melted
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley

Preheat oven to 350°F. Place the potatoes and garlic in a lightly greased roasting pan; cover tightly with foil. Bake for 60 minutes or until potatoes are just fork-tender. In a medium-sized bowl, blend mustard, butter, and parsley; toss with hot potatoes. Bake, uncovered, for 15 minutes more. Serve immediately.

Armenian Holiday Pilaf

10 cups

Thought you could get this only in a restaurant or at an Armenian holiday table? Wait'll you see how easy and tasty this side dish can be. And it'll feed a whole gang! (The wide noodles are the "little bit different" here.) Amazing!! So much taste in so few ingredients.

- ½ pound uncooked wide egg noodles
- 1 stick (½ cup) butter or margarine
- 3 cans (10½ ounces each) chicken broth
- 2 cups uncooked rice (*not* instant rice)

In a large saucepan, brown the noodles in the butter. Add broth and rice and bring to a full boil. Lower heat and simmer, covered, for 20 minutes.

NOTE: This is the greatest addition to any dinner—chicken, beef, turkey, anything!

Vermont Maple-Glazed Sweet Potatoes

5 servings

We can put a taste of New England on our dinner tables, then sit back and watch for the smiles.

- 5 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into quarters or sixths
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter or margarine, melted
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- ½ cup maple syrup
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg

Preheat oven to 350°F. Place potatoes in a 9″ × 13″ baking dish. In a bowl, mix together remaining ingredients; toss with potatoes to coat well. Bake, uncovered, for 1 hour. Stir and continue baking for ½ hour more, until glazed. Stir when removed from oven, then serve.

NOTE: If you don't have real Vermont maple syrup, you can use maple-flavored pancake syrup. But boy, oh boy, there's nothing in the world like real maple syrup.

Hash Brown Potatoes

8 to 10 servings

These are a favorite side dish with any meal, and now you can make them crispy and delicious right in your own kitchen! We can sure remember the old neighborhood with this one.

- 1 package (2 pounds) frozen hash brown potatoes, thawed
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- 1 can (10¾ ounces) cream of chicken or mushroom soup
- 1 container (16 ounces) sour cream
- 2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped

TOPPING

- 1 cup dry bread crumbs
- ½ cup (1 stick) margarine, melted

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, mix together the hash brown potatoes, onion, soup, sour cream, Cheddar cheese, salt, black pepper, and green pepper. Spread potato mixture in a greased 9" × 13" baking pan. Mix together topping ingredients and spread over potato mixture. Bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour, until golden brown.

Company Potatoes

12 servings

We have potatoes so often that we sometimes think we need something more special for company. Well, potatoes can be made special and simple and rich-tasting, like this dish!

- 4 to 5 large baking potatoes, peeled and coarsely grated
- 2 cups (8 ounces) grated Cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped scallions
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 2 cups (8 ounces) grated Swiss cheese
- Paprika for garnish

Preheat oven to 500°F. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients, except Swiss cheese and paprika. Coat a 12" × 14" baking dish or two 7" × 11" baking dishes with nonstick vegetable spray; put potato mixture in baking dish(es). Sprinkle with Swiss cheese and paprika, then bake for 45 minutes or until golden brown and crisp. Serve hot.

Cajun Rice

about 8 cups

Cajun food is all the rage 'cause it sounds so "in" and tastes so down-home good!! Try this with any meal at all and the whole meal becomes "in." Well, of course it's simple–just look at it.

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ½ pound chicken livers
- 2 teaspoons salt, divided
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) margarine
- 1 cup diced onion
- ½ green or red bell pepper, diced
- ¼ pound (4 ounces) diced mushrooms
- ½ pound diced cooked sausage (like kielbasa)
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon hot pepper sauce
- 6 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 6 cups cooked rice

In a large skillet, heat oil; sauté chicken livers with ½ teaspoon of the salt until done (no pink should remain). Dice the cooked chicken livers and set aside. In the same skillet, sauté onion, bell pepper, and mushrooms in the margarine until soft. Add diced chicken livers and sausage. Add remaining ingredients to skillet and cook until warmed through.

French Fry Crispy

6 to 8 servings

If you love French fries (and who doesn't!), here's a shortcut way of making them, starting with frozen fries. Know how much labor that saves us to begin with? And watch, they'll fight for the crisp part.

- 1 bag (24 ounces) frozen deep-fry French fries
- 1 cup (4 ounces) grated sharp Cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- ½ cup half-and-half
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- Dash of pepper

Preheat oven to 450°F. Spread the French fries in a 9" × 13" baking dish. Sprinkle with cheese, parsley, half-and-half, salt, and pepper. Cover and bake for 1 hour or until bubbly and done.

NOTE: I sometimes leave them in a little longer because I like them nice and brown.